

# CAROLINA QUARTERLY

Volume 9

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Cover drawing of Thomas Wolfe by William Mangum

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## *In This Issue*

### LITHOGRAPHS

BENTON MURDOCH SPRUANCE, Painter, Lithographer and Educator, was born in Philadelphia in 1904 and studied at the University of Pennsylvania School of Fine Arts and at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts where he was awarded two Cresson Travelling Scholarships in 1928 and 1929.

AWARDS AND PRIZES. The Gribbel Prize at the Phila. Print Club in 1929-1932-1939; the Pennell Medal for Graphic Art given by the Phila. Water Color Club, P.A.F.A. 1937 and the Eyre Medal (do.) in 1939; First Prize, National Ex. American Lithography, Phila. Print Club 1941; First Prize, Laguna Beach Art Assoc., Cal. 1943 and 1944; First Prize, American Artists for Victory Ex. of Prints, 1944; the Beck Medal for Portrait Painting, P.A.F.A. 1946; First Prize, Audubon Artists 1947; First Prize, American Color Print Society 1948; First Prize, Pennell Memorial Ex. Library of Congress, Washington, D. C. 1948; First Prize, Boston Print Makers 1949. In 1950 he received a Guggenheim Fellowship; First Prize, Regional Print Ex. Phila. Art Alliance 1951; First Prize, Philadelphia Print Makers, Phila. Print Club 1953.

WORK IN PUBLIC COLLECTIONS. Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, Pa.; the Library of Congress and the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.; the Phila. Museum of Art and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Phila., Pa.; the New York Public Library and others. There is a Mural Painting by him in the Municipal Court Bldg., Phila., and he has exhibited in all national Print Shows.

### COVER

WILLIAM MANGUM, *staff artist for The Chapel Hill Weekly and illustrator for several books by local writers, has exhibited paintings and sculpture at the North Carolina Museum, Raleigh, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, Creative Gallery, New York, and Little Studio, New York.*

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Carolina Quarterly expresses its thanks to Edward C. Aswell, Administrator of the estate of Thomas Wolfe, and the National Broadcasting Company for permission to publish the Thomas Wolfe script, as well as to Earl Hamner, NBC staff writer, George Voutsas, director, and the participants in "Biography In Sound," Mrs. Ralph H. Weaton, Mr. Aswell, Mrs. Clayton Hoagland, John Hall Wheelock, and Professor Theodore Ehrsam.

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# Thomas Wolfe: Biography in Sound

*NBC Radio Broadcast*

NARRATOR: (COLD) This is Biography in Sound.

(MUSIC: PUNCTUATION AND DOWN)

MRS. WHEATON: He used to say he wanted fame and wealth but once he got them I don't think he really wanted them. He wanted to be liked because he liked people.

MR. EHRSAM: He was too huge for the world. He had to be compressed.

MR. ASWELL: He was a man who tried to embrace the whole of life and put it in his books.

MRS. HOAGLAND: He could make poetry out of everything.

MR. WHEELLOCK: We all get excited, we all feel things, but Tom felt them ten times worse than anybody else.

(MUSIC: PUNCTUATION AND UNDER)

ANNCR: (2X)  
(:40)

The National Broadcasting Company presents *They Knew Thomas Wolfe*—a Biography in Sound, the enormously gifted American writer who died in 1938, and whose unique contribution to American literature includes such books as *LOOK HOMeward ANGEL*, *OF TIME AND THE RIVER*, *THE WEB AND THE ROCK*, and *YOU CAN'T GO HOME AGAIN*. Your narrator is Gene Hamilton and to tell you about Thomas Wolfe as they knew him will be members of his family, his editors, his friends. Dramatic reading will be by Ken Nordine.

MRS. WHEATON: I am Mabel Wolfe Wheaton, sister of Thomas Wolfe. I want to tell you a little of Tom's birth into our family and a little of our background, and a few of the memories of him as a child. Tom was born in the family October 3, 1900. We were born at 92 Woodbin Street, Asheville, North Carolina. We were born in the same room, a family of eight. We were born in the same room, on the same bed, I believe. People didn't throw their furniture away those days, you know, and so the house was set there for years about as it started. Tom was a very good baby. He came along six years after Fred, and was the child of our parents' old age, and they expected great things out of him. Tom was twelve years old when he entered the North State School. He'd been in the public schools, and the last year of his going to the public schools—I think it was in the seventh grade—a man by the name of J. M. Roberts

was principal. Mrs. Roberts, Tom's old teacher who has been known as his Beloved Margaret in his books—Margaret Roberts—didn't know Tom when he was in the public schools but Mr. Roberts read a little story—a little French story—and he asked the three grades—I think it was the sixth, seventh, and eighth—to write a little essay on what they remembered of his reading. He read them the story and he wanted their interpretation or their review of the thing, and they all wrote. Up to that time I don't think he paid any special attention to Tom Wolfe, except that he got good grades.

He took these little compositions home, and Mrs. Roberts was to look them over in her spare time (she wasn't teaching) and she said to Mr. Roberts a few days later, she said: "Who is this Tom Wolfe?" And he said, "Well, he lives over here on Woodbin Street. His father's in the tombstone business, down in the square. He's in the monument business," he said.—"Well, there's your best essay, of them all."

Tom had wanted to go to the University of Virginia, but our father wanted to make a lawyer of him. But Tom had other ideas. No one knew that he intended to be a writer. We thought a lawyer, with his big voice, and his command of English, and he was a great speaker. He could get up at any moment at school, and seemed to have possession of his faculties and could think on his feet, and our father kept saying to us, "Don't you laugh." (Tom, you know, was just sun, moon, and stars to them when he was a child.) And he said, "Don't you laugh at him. He'll be governor of the state someday. He'll go to the United States Senate.

NARRATOR:  
(:40)

When Thomas Wolfe, a few months short of his sixteenth birthday, came down from the mountains surrounding Asheville to the rolling country of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, he began an undergraduate career full of excitement, companionship and honors. It was here he met Professor Frederick H. Koch and decided he wanted to be a playwright.

His classmates recall that he was genial, generous, a friend to all, and full of schoolboyish high spirits. By every standard he was a success as a college student.

MRS. WHEATON:

And he graduated in 1920, from the University. And it had been pretty well decided, by him and his teachers there, that he was to go to Harvard, to the 47 Workshop, which was then being taught by George Pierce Baker. Dr. Baker and Tom became great friends at Harvard. And Dr. Baker believed in him. Tom was most enthusiastic in playwriting. He dreamed and he wrote that he'd get a play on Broadway, and something that would live. And we of the family couldn't see much to that. We thought it took a genius, or someone with great talent—we couldn't see anyone in our family, our background, anything, that deserves the name genius. And we couldn't feel . . . he

was too close to us, and we thought these writers and playwrights, you know, all the old ones like Tennyson and Poe and all of them, they were so removed, they were on pedestals above us, we spoke of them . . . or far away, and we couldn't feel that someone so close to us had the power to write a play or write a book. And no one had thought of his being a novelist at the time he was at Harvard. But Dr. Baker wrote home and asked Mamma to produce the money for one more year, that he would be greater than O'Neill, if they just gave him time. And then it was . . . I think the last year he wrote several plays there, but I think there were seventeen short plays in all, I think, are housed at Harvard at the Houghton Library (I believe I'm right in that figure). One of them, "Welcome to Our City" was given at Harvard that last year Tom was there.

Tom came down to New York and submitted his play, "Welcome to Our City," to the Theatre Guild, and they kept it and kept it, and he hung around New York, and he wrote home he was very hopeful because it had been so welcomed and so successful at Radcliffe up at Boston, why, he thought surely that this Theatre Guild would take it immediately. Well, one evening he went and the man who had the manuscript, or who had the play, shut down his desk, handed it to him, told him he couldn't use it. And Tom almost burst into tears. And he told him what the public wanted, that the public wanted realism, that they didn't want just this beauty and this fantastic writing, they wanted realism. Now, whether that had anything to do with his writing "Look Homeward, Angel" from his life-story, from the weather of his life, I don't know.

NARRATOR:  
(:30)

Before leaving Harvard, Wolfe had applied to Professor Homer Andrew Watt, chairman of the Department of English of Washington Square College of New York University for a position as an instructor. Wolfe received the appointment, and at New York University he sustained himself as a teacher from 1924 until 1930. Theodore Ehrsam, himself a Professor at New York University today, was one of the students Thomas Wolfe taught.

MR. EHRSAM:

Well, it was a long time ago, but I was at Washington Square College in 1929, and one of the courses that was required for freshmen was a survey course in English and American literature. The text of the course was a huge one; most freshmen were a little bit apprehensive as to whether we were to read everything in it or not, and of course it turned out we didn't. My first day in class, this huge six-foot-six gentleman came in and introduced himself as Thomas Wolfe, and then he took us from the very beginning—Beowulf—all the way down to and through Thomas Hardy, through most of this huge book. But his whole claim on us was the intensity with which he taught. I mean, his whole life seemed in that hour to be focused on

nothing else except teaching us. He was very interested in the poetry. And we were enraptured, I mean, we realized as if there were a big sign across the front: "Genius at Work." We knew, in our own crude way, that nothing you could do would stop him from teaching you at that particular time. You were seeing something you knew that was, well, like a volcano erupting. It was one in a hundred. We didn't know what to do about it except to be glad it was happening, I suppose, to be in awe of it, and not to interrupt. He held his classes in good order and good discipline by the force of his enthusiasm.

NARRATOR:  
(:58)

All the while that Wolfe was teaching, in his spare moments he was engulfed in a tremendous labor. It had all grown out of his endeavor to set down the shape and feel of one year in childhood. From that beginning, he had conceived the plan for a book, in which he wanted to present the picture, not merely of his youth, but of the whole town from which he came, and all the people in it, just as he had known them. And as he labored on it, the thing took life beneath his hand, and grew, and already he could dimly see the substance of a dozen other books to carry the thread, moving out, as he had moved, from that small town into the greater world beyond, until in the end, as the strands increased, extended, wove, and crossed, they would take on the denseness and complexity of the whole web of life, and of America.

MR. WHEELLOCK:

I remember very well the day when the manuscript of Tom's first book came in, the book that was later published under the title of "Look Homeward, Angel." That was not the title that the manuscript bore when it came in. Tom had various titles in mind and the one he had finally settled on at that time was "O Lost." But we at Scribners felt that was not a very attractive title or particularly descriptive of the book, and we got Tom to change it to "Look Homeward, Angel," which as you know is taken from "Lycidas," the line from Milton's "Lycidas:" "Look homeward, angel, now and melt with ruth." Well, Tom had been working for a number of years on this enormous manuscript—in fact, all Tom's books were part of one great conglomeration of manuscript—and he was teaching during the years when he was working on this book, at New York University. In the summer he went abroad, traveled in England and on the continent, and was working all the time on this book. And the time came, in 1928, when he felt that he had done all that he could with it and he sent it out to—I don't remember the exact number of publishers, but I should think perhaps seven or eight—and they all declined the book. Then Tom gave up hope of getting it published, but as a last attempt he turned it over to an agent, Madelaine Boyd, and went abroad. We got the manuscript, received the manuscript sometime in . . . I think it was August, 1928, and it was first read by Mr. Dunn, Mr. Charles Dunn of Scribners, who reads



many manuscripts there and has for many years, one of our ablest men, and he was very much impressed by it. It was an enormous, unpromising-looking manuscript, quite battered and worn, showing its career: it had been to various publishers and thumbed over and read, and declined. But he got very much excited, Mr. Dunn got very much excited reading passages from this book, and he turned it over to me (I was at that time, in 1928, an assistant editor to Maxwell Perkins, who was the managing editor of Scribners) and I read it, and I was equally excited. And I read the whole thing and I drew up a report on it for Mr. Scribner and for Mr. Perkins, and then Mr. Perkins himself read it, and as a result of that wrote a letter to Thomas Wolfe. It's very brief, and reads as follows: "Mrs. Ernest Boyd left with us some weeks ago the manuscript of your novel, 'O Lost.' I do not know whether it would be possible to work out a plan by which it might be worked into a form publishable by us. But I do know that, setting the practical aspects of the matter aside, it is a very remarkable thing, and that no editor could read it without being excited by it. Your letter that came with it shows that you realize what difficulties it presents, so that I need not enlarge upon this side of the question. What we should like to know is whether you will be in New York in the fairly near future, when we can see you and discuss the manuscript. We should certainly look forward to such an interview with very great interest."

MRS. WHEATON: Tom said that when he got that letter he felt like a man who jumped onto the horse and rode in all directions. He was elated, he was delighted to know there was someone who was interested, who would even read the manuscript. He came back to America as soon as he could and the next day went into Scribners. He walked back and forth (that's 597 Fifth Avenue, in New York City). He walked back and forth for a long time before he got the courage to go in, and he went upstairs, and when he emerged from the place a couple hours later he was crunching something in his hand, but he was so delighted that he found himself up at 124th at Morningside Park or someplace up there, and he never knew how he got there, he said. And in his hand he was still clutching this thing and he opened it; it was a check for \$500 that Scribners had given him, the first money he'd ever received. He came home, though, in September, and I remember we had a big gathering at my home, a party, and I had invited all the people in town I knew who were literary or who were teachers or who could appreciate Tom and he seemed pleased with the party. And the next afternoon we carried him to the station with Mamma (of course our father was dead) and we had Mamma in the car and Tom. And Tom walked me down the tracks at Biltmore, and he said to me, "Now Mabel, I want to tell you something." He said, "When I come again I'll probably have to come incognito," he said, "be

wearing whiskers or the like." And he saw that I was a little dumbfounded, and he said "You know," he said, "I've written in this book a few things about people that I'm afraid some of them are not going to like."

NARRATOR:  
(:16)

The thought that he might hurt people by revealing them as he had seen them pained Wolfe, but his aim was to write an epic, and he could write it no differently than he saw it. In a lengthy letter accompanying the manuscript to the publisher, he wrote . . .

MR. WHEELLOCK:

"To me, who was joined so passionately with the people in this book, it seemed that they were the greatest people I had ever known, and the texture of their lives the richest and strangest, and discounting the distortion of judgment that my nearness to them would cause, I think they would seem extraordinary to anyone. If I could get my magnificent people on paper as they were, if I could get down something of their strangeness and richness in my book, I believe that no one would object to my 250,000 words, or that if my pages swarmed with this rich life, few would damn an inept manner and accuse me of not knowing the technique for making a book, as practiced by Balzac, Flaubert, Hardy or Gide. If I have failed to get any of this opulence into my book, the fault lies not in my people, who could make an epic, but in me."

NARRATOR:  
(:15)

On Sunday, October 20th, 1929, the first reviews of LOOK HOMEWARD ANGEL were published in Wolfe's home town. The next day just about everybody in town went out to buy the book, and they read it, and then the storm broke!

MRS. WHEATON:

I was secretary of the largest club in town, the Woman's Club, recording secretary, so on this Tuesday afternoon I went to our Woman's Club, and the whole place was buzzing. Well, when I got up to the door of the room they were standing around in groups, and if you had ever heard about the locusts coming and the great noise they make in coming to a district. . . . But there they were all buzzing and soon as they saw me everything stopped. You could have heard a pin drop. I went in the room and my subconscious mind seemed to work at the same time I was carrying on. I knew they hated me. I went up to the desk and had to start the meeting. I read their names and then I read some letters that were received and I read the minutes of the last meeting, and then we had a speaker that afternoon, a Judge Highet, and he made this speech, but during the time of his speech (I hardly know what he said) I began to look the faces over in front of me and then it was that I knew how they disliked even the sound of our voice or anything, and I knew that Tom had disturbed them in his book. We hadn't heard any compliments, everyone was just completely shocked. My mother and I began getting telephone calls, all day long the phone would ring, and most of it was sympathy for us, sym-

pathy that we had Tom Wolfe. And finally after about two weeks I went to town one day and one of my old friends from a large family here, an important family, she shook her fist right up in my face, and she said, "We know what to do with people like Tom Wolfe, when he comes back." I rushed right home and wrote him a letter. I knew no one in the family had written him, I knew the shock of the town, the talk in the town, and I said: "Dear Tom. You certainly have put us on the map. We aren't nonentities any more, and that would certainly please Papa, if he could look down and hear and see a little that's going on. The whole world seems to be Gant or Wolfe conscious." And I said, "Now don't you worry at all about what you've done. You're a writer now."

NARRATOR:  
(:12)

Thomas Wolfe had indeed become a writer. Two of his friends at this time were Clayton and Kathleen Hoagland. Mrs. Hoagland, herself a novelist, recalls . . .

MRS. HOAGLAND:

He used to visit us in Rutherford quite often. One night it was in August, a beautiful moonlight night, and another friend was with him. About one o'clock in the morning we decided we would walk down to the station with him—he had just had about fifteen cups of tea (which he loved) and ten or eleven fish sandwiches (cold fish sandwiches, another of his pet things)—but anyway, we started out. We got down towards the station, which is the Carlton Hill station at Rutherford, and it is also the little station where the bleachery has its loading platform and works, and they're built of yellow brick (I'm describing this because I want you to see what happened to me). So Tom was coming along with his head thrown back, walking as if he owned the world and sniffed up everything. So we got down to where it wasn't built up very much and there in front of us was this little station—a little wooden shack, one room. Behind it, silhouetted in the moonlight, was this great big tree, and the rails were like silver ribbons, and the insects were going up-and-down (you know how they go in that chorus), and there was a freight car—two freight cars, one red, I remember, and one brown (one was the Virginia Railroad), and Tom looked, and you'd think he was sniffing fire like a Dalmatian or something, when he saw a freight car because he got all excited and his eyes came to light, everything came to light, and he threw his arms out and he looked at me and he said, "K-K-Kitty!" (you know he always spoke with a kind of stutter when he got excited and rapt in something) "K-K-Kitty! Look! This is America. All over the country there are little stations like this, with a tree, there's a siding, with a factory, for loading freight cars. Look at the rails. Here," he said. "Come." And he made us kneel down and feel the vibrations on the tracks of a train that might be coming. Then he said, "Come along. I want to show you how you should write. See these walls. Feel them. You can't write except you feel them. Look at the

color. They are yellow. They're a *faded* yellow. Feel those." We all had to feel the wall. He said, "Feel the ground. Put your hand on the ground," he said, "listen to the insects. Look. This moon is shining over all this eastern part of America. It *will* be shining," he said. "This is America, Kitty." Well, I came home and I sat down and I thought, "Well, now I know why he writes like he does. He's in love with America."

\* \* \*

READER:

"America has a thousand lights and weathers, and we walk the streets, we walk the streets forever, we walk the streets of life alone. It is the place of howling wind, the hurling leaves in old October, the hard cool falling to the earth of acorns. The place of the storm-tossed moaning of the wintery mountainside, where the young men cry out in their throats and feel the savage vigor, the rude strong energies. The place also where the trains cross rivers. It is a fabulous country, the only fabulous country. It is the place where miracles not only happen, but where they happen all the time. It is the place of autumnal moons hung low and orange at the frosty edges of the pines. It is the place of frost and silence, of the clean dry shocks and opulence of enormous pumpkins that yellow on the hard-clotted earth. It is the place of the stir and feathery stumble of the hens upon their roost, the frosty broken barking of the dogs, the gray barn shapes, and solid shadow of the running sweeps of the moon-whited countryside, the wailing whistle of the fast express. It is the place of flares and steamings on the tracks, and the swing and barb and totter and dance of lanterns in the yards. It is the place of dings and knellings and the sudden glare of mighty engines over sleeping faces in the night. It is the place of the terrific web and spread and smouldering, the distant glare of Philadelphia, and the solid rumble of the sleepers. It is also the place where the Transcontinental Limited is stroking eighty miles an hour across the continent, and the small dark towns whip by like bullets, and there is only the fanlike stroke of the secret, immense and lonely earth again."

\* \* \*

NARRATOR:  
(:22)

After Wolfe left his first publisher, he chose for his new editor Edward Aswell, then associated with Harper and Brothers and who performed the tremendous task of editing *THE WEB AND THE ROCK, YOU CAN'T GO HOME AGAIN*, and *THE HILLS BEYOND*.

MR. ASWELL:

Today after twenty-six years, when most of the books of the period are dead and forgotten, "LOOK HOMEWARD, ANGEL" is still being reprinted, and its total sales have far exceeded those of most best sellers. Each new generation as it comes along rediscovers it and claims this book for its own. For Wolfe wrote about youth, and he spoke to youth more convincingly than any American writer has

ever done. Thousands, reading him for the first time, have found something of themselves suddenly become articulate and universal. And with the joy of recognition have murmured, "Ah, yes. That's the way it is."

NARRATOR:  
(:37)

After the publication of LOOK HOMEWARD ANGEL, Wolfe threw the great force of his genius into his writing. He was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship, and traveled in Europe. During this period America was shunned by many of our young writers, and some of them even found pleasure in debunking things American. Thomas Wolfe never joined that chorus, and in Europe he was homesick and haunted by the memories of his homeland. He made his headquarters in New York writing, teaching and often thinking of Asheville which he had not visited in seven years.

\* \* \*

READER:

"He came to the city with a shout of triumph and of victory in his blood, and the belief that he would conquer it, be taller and more mighty than its greatest towers. But now he knew a loneliness unutterable. Alone he tried to hold all the hunger and madness of the earth within the limits of a little room, and beat his fists against the walls, only to hurl his body savagely into the streets again, those terrible streets that had neither pause nor curve, nor any door that he could enter.

Why was he so unhappy? Suddenly he remembered the streets of noon some dozen years ago, and the solid, lonely, liquid leather shuffle of men's feet as they came home at noon to dinner, the welcoming shout of their children, the humid warmth and fragrance of the turnip greens, the sound of screen doors being slammed, and then the brooding hush and peace and full fed apathy of noon again."

\* \* \*

NARRATOR:

And after seven years absence, Thomas Wolfe went home again.

MRS. WHEATON:

He came to visit Mamma and to hunt a cabin to write in, to be near Asheville but to be alone. And you never saw such a welcoming as Asheville gave him. They stood in groups around him on the street, and twelve to twenty would be around him talking to him, and they'd come and . . . someone yelled one day and said, "They're not wanting to kill you now, Tom, because you put them in the book, but there are a number of them would, because you didn't put them in." And he was received, steak dinners were given for him, and he was asked by the clubs and by the hotels and such to speak, here and there. The headlines were in the paper that "Tom Wolfe was home," and we were all very happy. We were happy to know that the people were receiving him, and he was delighted to know that there was no hatred in their hearts and that they wanted him home, and he wanted to come home.

NARRATOR:  
(:42)

Wolfe returned to New York but in the summer of 1937 he went back to Asheville to spend the summer writing and relaxing on a wooded hilltop near the City Recreation Park. In the fall he went again to New York and severed connection with his long time friend and editor, Maxwell Perkins. In a letter to his mother, Wolfe wrote of his new editor, Edward Aswell, saying: "I have been invited out to the country by one of my new editors for Christmas. He is a young man, just my own age, married and with a child just a year old. I think he is a very fine fellow and I believe I am going to have a good time."

MR. ASWELL:

Well, Thomas Wolfe spent a good many nights, week-ends at my house in the country in Chappaqua, New York, and he spent the last Christmas of his life with me there, and I'll never forget the occasion. We had made plans to meet in the early afternoon of Christmas Eve, the lower level of Grand Central Station, and, knowing how Tom felt about trains (he wrote about them at great length), knowing how he felt about them, I also knew that he couldn't catch them. So it was arranged that if by chance he should not be there, I would take the train and then he would be on the next one, which I would meet in Chappaqua. Well, I arrived well ahead of time in the early afternoon of that Christmas Eve, and Grand Central Station was what it's always like on Christmas Eve—just a milling mass of humanity. But I had no trouble at all discovering that Thomas Wolfe was not there because he stood head and shoulders above anybody else in the crowd. And I pushed my way to the gate, and he was still not anywhere in sight, and I waited until almost train time. It then occurred to me, "Well, perhaps he arrived early and got aboard the train," so I rushed down and walked through the train to look for him, and he was not there. I came out at the last coach and spoke to the conductor, briefly described Thomas Wolfe, and asked him whether he had seen the man. He said, "Oh, you mean that fellow who always gets off at Chappaqua." Well, I was a little impressed because he clearly recognized him and knew where he went. And he said, "Why yes, we all know him on this line. He knows all of us, too. He knows our wives' names and how many children we've got, and how much illness we've had in the family, and he always asks us about the various members of the family. But no, he's not on this train."

So, as arranged, I took the train and went home, without Tom. Having arrived home, I then motored to the station to meet the next train about one hour later. The train came in, I waited for the people to get off, and they got off in droves, but there was no Thomas Wolfe. Finally, as I remember, about one o'clock of a very clear frosty night, Christmas morning, I met the train. There weren't many people who got off, it was almost ready to pull out, when Tom finally came down the steps. He was carrying his overcoat on his arm. In one hand he carried an overnight

bag, in the other hand he carried what looked like a dead animal, and he was holding it by the tail. I went up and shook hands. He was sort of sheep-faced and he said, "Sorry to be late, Ed. I hadn't meant to do this, but," he said, "I got something here for your boy for Christmas." And he held out the dead animal. It was the largest and ugliest stuffed toy dog anybody had ever seen. It had been gift-wrapped when he bought it, but he had used it to wipe up the bars with, the wrappings had come off, the box had disintegrated, the tail of the dog was almost off—it was hanging by a few threads—and it was very much the worse for wear. Nevertheless, the dog went under the tree that night, and the boy got it for Christmas.

NARRATOR:  
(:06)

On another occasion Tom paid a visit to his friends, Clayton and Kathleen Hoagland.

MRS. HOAGLAND:

Another thing about Tom that few people really realized was that he always thought he didn't have enough time. I remember when he'd come out to our place—he was very fond of my mother. She would play the piano and sing. She could play anything he'd want, and he loved "Jeannie with the Light Brown Hair," and all of those Stephen Foster things. He was very romantic about his music, and I still think that "Jeannie with the Light Brown Hair" is one of the most beautiful of all songs of that type written. My mother used to sing it, and Tom would join in. But the interesting thing is, my mother is very good at telling fortunes with cards, and Tom would always want his fortune told. But he would stand behind her while she was dealing out the cards, and he would just wring his hands with nervousness, then he would start to prowl up and down the room. "If you see death there, Mrs. Jewett, if you see death there, don't tell me. Don't tell me." Then he'd come back, and he'd look over at the cards. "Is death there?" She'd say, "No."—"Don't tell me if you see it." That was always on his mind, an early death. He thought that he could never write down all he had to write.

\* \* \*

READER:

"Something has spoken to me in the night, burning the tapers of the waning year; something has spoken in the night, and told me I shall die, I know not where. Saying: To lose the earth you know, for greater knowing; to lose the life you have, for greater life; to leave the friends you loved, for greater loving, to find a land more kind than home, more large than earth—Whereon the pillars of this earth are founded, toward which the conscience of the world is tending—a wind is rising, and the rivers flow."

\* \* \*

MRS. HOAGLAND:

To me he was a very tragic and sad figure, and a very wonderful figure, because he was eating himself out with this terrific urge to get every bit of America down. And I think if more people would read Thomas Wolfe—the



same as what happened to me—they would begin to feel the pulse of this great country. Because that's what he does. His novels are so big, people say they are formless, but they're not. They're like America. And Tom, when he'd speak about writing (which he often did, and discuss it), it wouldn't be in the small thing, but it would be in the greater outlook of the thing. But he could take . . . well, another thing, he could take the smallest piece of paper—that to him had the romance of the forests, the men who handled it, the store it was bought from, the people who might have handled it before he got it, what would have happened to that piece of paper if someone else had got it, what was happening to it when he had it, he would tell you the color, how the light was on it, the shadow of his hand on it. That was the greatness of Tom. He could see beauty in everything, and make poetry of everything.

MR. ASWELL:

Well, there's been a lot of myth and legend about the way Thomas Wolfe wrote, and he had two different ways of writing—one belonged to his earlier period and another to his later period. In his earlier period he used the top of a refrigerator as a desk and stood up at it, and had his paper on top of the refrigerator, and wrote in that way. I knew him at a later period when he had acquired different habits of writing. I remember particularly the late afternoon of the last day Thomas Wolfe spent in New York. He was planning to take a train at 7:something from Pennsylvania Station, to go out to Purdue University to make a speech. And then he was going on to the west coast, the only part of the country he had never seen. The fact that he'd never seen it was of course one reason he wanted to go there. Another reason was that he wanted to ride on a streamlined train and he had never done so (at that time there were no streamlined trains in the east). Well, on this particular afternoon, his last in New York, I arrived at his apartment in the Chelsea to take possession of the manuscript which he was going to turn over to me, and which he did turn over to me. But when I arrived about 5 in the afternoon, Tom was still writing. He welcomed me, told me to sit down, he'd be ready in about a minute, but there was something he wanted to finish. I sat down on an old stiff sofa, and the minute lasted for an hour, while Tom wrote. There was a big table in the living-room of this suite he had, and on that table was a huge stack of yellow second-sheets which he used for his manuscript-writing. Beside it was an immense pile of pencils which his secretary sharpened every morning. He sat there writing away in his great big gargantuan scrawl, with about six to eight lines on the page. And as he would write and finish a page he would grab it with his left hand and shove it on the floor, take a new page and go on. When he wore out a pencil he'd throw it on the floor, and the floor was littered with sheets containing his writing. None of the sheets was numbered. It was his secretary's job to pick the sheets up and, by the internal evidence,



put them in order and then type them out. Well, he sat there, and that was his manner of writing and his manner of working in the latest period of his life. He sat there and poured out—I suppose he must have poured out 5,000 words in that hour.

NARRATOR:  
(:27)

And so Wolfe left for his western journey, stopping at Purdue University, where he gave a brilliant speech, and then proceeded to Seattle. There he fell desperately ill. The doctors who attended him felt he should go to Johns Hopkins Hospital, and under the care of his sister, Mabel, and a nurse, Thomas Wolfe was brought on a train across the width of the continent he loved so passionately.

MRS. WHEATON:

We got into Baltimore on Saturday morning and the Hopkins people were there, the ambulance was there, and an interne or two to take him, and when he was lying in that stretcher in the station Tom looked up and he said, "Where are you taking me to now?" I said, "Well, Tom, we're going to try to get you well. You've been having these dreadful headaches." And I said, "And I want to tell you one thing, Tom. You're going up there where all these people can find out what's causing all this, and when you get all right, you're going across the country, and you won't be bothered with a single member of your family." I said, "We won't be following after you for anything. But we just can't stand to see you sick like this." And he said, "I want to rest. I'm awfully tired." Well, I left him, and I followed the ambulance in a taxi.

MR. ASWELL:

I arrived from New York the same morning. Tom had arrived about an hour before I got there, so I went straight up into his room. I shall never forget that occasion. Tom was lying in the bed. He half-lifted himself into a sitting position, resting on his elbows, put out an immense hand and shook mine and said, "Ed, it's wonderful to see you. Glad to see you. How are you, how are you?" I told him that I was all right, but how was he? "Oh," he said, "these terrible headaches. I don't know what causes it, maybe they'll find out." And I said, "I hope so." And I sat down beside the bed and we began to talk. I knew what he wanted from me was reassurance about the manuscript which he had left with me and which by then I had read. It was the manuscript from which later three books were edited and published posthumously. I gave him complete reassurance about those books, how wonderful they were. And he began talking to me, very lucidly, very clearly, and suddenly he stopped in the middle of a sentence, and it was as though a shade had been drawn on a scene you'd been looking at. The shade came down, everything went blank. He sat there for a moment, not looking around wildly or anything, just blank. The shade then went up. He resumed the sentence in the middle exactly where it was. That was the only evidence I saw of the effect on his mind of what turned out to be the cause of his death, which was tuberculosis of the brain.

MR. WHEELLOCK: When Tom lay dying in Baltimore, he wrote a letter which I think was perhaps one of the finest anyone has ever written, and it was written to Max:

Dear Max,  
I'm sneaking this against orders, but I've got a hunch, and I wanted to write these words to you. I've made a long voyage and been to a strange country and I've seen the Dark Man very close, and I don't think I was too much afraid of him, but so much of mortality still clings to me. I wanted most desperately to live and still do, and I thought about you all a thousand times, and wanted to see you all again, and there was the impossible anguish and regret of all the work I had not done, of all the work I had to do, and I know now I'm just a grain of dust, and I feel as if a great window has been opened on life I didn't know about before, and if I come through this I hope to God I am a better man, and in some strange way I can't explain I know I am a deeper and a wiser one. If I get on my feet and out of here it will be months before I head back. But if I get on my feet, I'll come back. Whatever happens, I had this hunch and I wanted to write to you and tell you no matter what happens or has happened I shall always think of you and feel about you the way it was that Fourth of July day three years ago when you met me at the boat and we went out on the cafe on the river and had a drink, and later went on top of the tall building, and all the strangeness and the glory and the power of life and of the city was below.

Yours always,  
Tom

NARRATOR: He died September 15th, 1938, and was taken by his family to Asheville, North Carolina and buried in Riverside Cemetery.

MRS. HOAGLAND: "And I think if more people would read Thomas Wolfe—the same as what happened to me—they would begin to feel the pulse of this great country."

\* \* \*

READER: "There where the hackles of the Rocky Mountains blaze in the blank and naked radiance of the moon, go make your resting stool upon the highest peak. Can you not see us now? The continental wall just sheer and flat, its huge black shadow on the plain, and the plain sweeps out against the East, two thousand miles away. The great snake that you see there is the Mississippi River. Behold the gemstrung cities of the good green east flung like star dust through the field of night. That spreading constellation of the north is called Chicago, and that giant wink that blazes in the moon is the pendant lake that it is built upon. There's Boston, ringed with the bracelet of its shining little towns, and all the lights that sparkle on the rocky indentations of New England. Here, southward, and a little to the west, and yet still coasted to the sea, is our

intensest ray, the sprintered firmament of the towered island of Manhattan. Turn now, seeker, on your resting stool atop the rocky mountain and look another thousand miles or so across the moon-blazing fiend-world of the Painted Desert, and beyond the Sierras' ridge, that magic conjury of light there to the west, ringed like a studded belt around the magic setting of its lovely harbor, is the fabled town of San Francisco, below it, Los Angeles and all the cities of the California shore. Observe the whole of it, survey it as you might survey a field. Make it your garden, seeker, or your backyard patch. Be at ease in it. It's your oyster—yours to open if you will. Don't be frightened, it's not so big now, when your footstool is the Rocky Mountains. Reach out and dip a hatful of cold water from Lake Michigan. Drink it—we've tried it—you'll not find it bad. Take your shoes off and work your toes down in the river oozes of the Mississippi bottom—it's very refreshing on a hot night in the summertime. Help yourself to a bunch of Concord grapes up there in northern New York State—they're getting good now. Or raid that watermelon patch down there in Georgia. Or, if you like, you can try the Rockyfords here at your elbow, in Colorado. Just make yourself at home, refresh yourself, get the feel of things, adjust your sights, and get the scale. It's your pasture now, and it's not so big—only three thousand miles from east to west, only two thousand miles from north to south—but all between where ten thousand points of light prick out the cities, towns and villages, there, seeker, you will find us burning in the night."

\* \* \*

NARRATOR:  
(:35)  
(2X:55)

You have been listening to BIOGRAPHY IN SOUND which tonight presented a portrait of Thomas Wolfe. We wish to thank our guests, Mrs. Ralph Harris Wheaton, Professor Theodore Ehrsam, Mr. John Hall Wheelock, Mr. Edward Aswell, and Mrs. Clayton Hoagland. We also wish to express our gratitude to those who gave of their time and knowledge of Wolfe to our writer, Earl Hamner and our director, George Voutsas.

(MUSIC:

UP AND UNDER TILL THEME)



BIRD CAGE

*Benton Spruance*

Pati Hill

## Morton

From Chapter XI  
*The Nine Mile Circle*

Ever since Morton was born women had been telling him how beautiful he was, or how handsome he was, or how good looking, according to who they were and what they saw. Ever since he was born and rolling about the parks of Richmond, Virginia, in his perambulator when women generally took him for one of themselves and said what hell he was going to raise amongst the others and his nurse was having to set them straight, raising his stock still further. They had been telling him continually ever since he could remember—except briefly in his adolescence when women did not think it proper to tell a growing boy such things and girls did not think it profitable and only old ladies seemed to see anything in him—ever since then he had been told in every way it is possible for a woman to tell it, and sometimes men, and yet he did not believe it. Could never really see it.

Am I? he would say over and over again, every time with that look of surprise and gratitude so dear to the feminine heart, so much a part of him, am I? Do you really think so? and they would tell him again and he would laugh and look into the mirror, wondering to himself, Am I? Am I? But unless the woman was looking into the mirror behind him he could not see it.

Tell me again, he would say to Phyllis, teasing her, tell me again how beautiful I am, until sometimes she would be so angry she could have thrown something at his glorious head, but he never really believed it, either from lack of imagination or objectivity or one of the endless number of lacks people were always finding in Morton. He never really believed it.

He didn't give himself away, though. From the beginning he dressed the part and walked the part and talked the part and even incorporated this part into some of his daily actions like shaving and bathing and selecting his tie (You needn't try to get into the bathroom when Morton is in the house, Phyllis would say, why it takes me half the time to get dressed that it takes Morton to shave one side of his face) but when it came to remembering to have his

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picture taken for his mother on Mother's Day, or posing for a group of struggling young artists that Phyllis had taken an interest in, or even just appearing for a few minutes in an amateur theatrical as the wordless hero (he would never act or he would have been in Hollywood long ago with a vanity like his), he simply wasn't available.

Oh, he would say, I don't know what they would want with *me*, he would say, why can't they find someone better fitted to do the thing? No no Phyllis, don't count on me, and even Phyllis would be forced to admit that for a man as vain as Morton, he did not rise much to the opportunity to show it off.

The other fiction about Morton was that he was a ladies' man and this fiction was so persistent and the results of the fiction were so striking that even Morton came half to believe it, especially in later years, when the continuous seduction of young women had become as much of a habit with him as the part in his hair or his coffee in the morning, but the truth of the matter was that he was never more interested in women than the average man and perhaps even less, for having been deprived of the right to force them to his will, and divested of the mystery of the opposite sex almost before he became aware of it, in the back seats of a dozen automobiles and the love seats of half a dozen parlors and a rose garden. No, for a man who was destined for the rest of his life to play a Romeo or at worst a poor man's Valentino, he had a barely inspiring start and nearly nothing to encourage him from there on in.

Morton met Phyllis whom he later married on a picnic, and that was unusual already, because he had passed the age for picnics, if he had ever really been in it, but what was more unusual was that he could never afterwards remember the other people who were on the picnic or how he came to be invited or even where it was they went to be on it. Years later he was still saying to Phyllis, who were those people who went on that picnic with us anyway, and how did I come to know them? and Phyllis would tell him again. Would tell him their names in couples and tell him how it happened to have come about, which was always a reason for which he could not seem to account, and always seemed a different reason from the previous one and as far as he knew he had never seen any of them again or ever saw any of them before, but after a time he learned not to pursue the subject too far because it was a subject that Phyllis took ill, either because it made her mad to think that he could not even remember the people he was with when he met her, or because it seemed to cast a shadow on the people who were her friends by their being so vague to him, so when Jan said, When did you meet mother, tell me again when you met mother? he would just say, Well it was on some kind of an excursion or other with

some friends of your mother's and then he would get off on to the red shoes as quickly as he could, for he remembered better about the red shoes and it gave him something to anchor to in the confusion.

Because it was the red shoes that made him fall in love with Phyllis. The red shoes and the hair, but the hair was later and so it was really the red shoes. Not that he hadn't probably seen a girl in red shoes before. He guessed he had plenty of times, if that was the fashion among women then, but these shoes seemed to live a life so completely independent of the wearer as to be almost beings in themselves.

(But Morton, said Phyllis, I've told you a hundred times I was wearing my bedroom slippers, it was not the fashion to wear red shoes and I was not wearing red shoes, I was wearing my bedroom slippers because I forgot to put on my others.)

But anyway, whatever the reason, she was wearing red shoes with tassels on them, and while she was carrying on a conversation in the top part of her that was very serious and that he did not understand or agree with or simply wasn't listening to, his mind kept straying to those incredible feet of that incredible color and shape (the shape simply of nothing for they had neither heels nor toes and looked more like miniature gondolas than anything else) that kept tucking themselves this way and that in the grass, one minute showing and the next hidden, wriggling themselves out where he least expected, and seeming almost at one moment to be ready to leave the wearer altogether, while all the time the girl in them went on talking and talking about something that went in one side of his head and out the other (Morton, I really do not believe you have ever listened to a word I have said in my life) and in the end he supposed he followed them home, although he could not really say. He just remembered that suddenly he was always with a basket of sandwiches on his arm (he who never carried anything) or sitting uncomfortably on a stone or picking his way cautiously along some briary path somewhere while the girl who was with him was here and there, bringing him this and that kind of woods thing and talking in a serious tone of voice like his mother only not, or reading him something out of a book that he did not listen to because he was too busy following the feet or the hair or the gestures of another girl who seemed as unconscious of the girl who was talking as he was himself.

Sometimes when she was leaning forward very seriously looking up into his eyes with her fast little feet tucked under her, he would bend down and take her chin in his hand and be about to kiss her when all at once she would fly into a rage or become icy cold or haughty or simply too exasperated for words because it



seemed they were not doing that at all, not talking love at all and he would be confused and sit back on his rock and be silent and they would have to begin all over again. Other times though, by some curious piece of luck, equally mysterious and unpredictable, he managed to have the right words and the right gesture at the same moment and things would be wonderful and they would kiss and lie on the grass and look at the sun or the moon and be terribly cosy until something came over her and it was finished again.

Yes, it was really this thing that led him on and on, when with any other girl he would have given up long ago (because by then he had learned that either a girl will or a girl won't and so many girls will, that it is not worth bothering with a girl who won't). This curious sensation of courting a girl who was perpetually chaperoned by an unseen person inside herself, not just a conscience or anything like that, but a real person who at times entirely eclipsed the girl he was courting, that led him on, that led him on carrying picnic lunches and stumbling through the dark and catching colds and later marrying her and settling down in a rented house in a place far from home in a job he wasn't suited for. It was this impossible-to-get-at-girl, and later when Phyllis said, I can't think why you went on wearing me down like that and getting us into this, when you've never known me or understood me for a minute, he could not think why either, and he would just smile and say, I married you for your red shoes, which at first made her smile too, but later didn't make her smile anymore and still later made her cold and angry as no girl had ever been cold and angry, as nothing he had ever known before had been cold and angry, as nothing he had ever known before could be cold or angry in the world. It was for this that later he went back to the others, back to the other girls and the other people and the other things and it was for this that they finally both went back as much as anything else. But it was also for this that later, when he was drunk or lonely or just felt like saying something to someone, he said that Phyllis was the great love of his life, was his only real passion. For this as much as anything else.



Eric Bentley

## The Harmfulness of Tobacco

A Lecture

By

ANTON CHEKHOV

A New English Version

*The lecturer has long side whiskers but no moustache. He wears an old threadbare frock-coat. He makes a majestic entrance, bows to his audience, adjusts his waistcoat.*

Ladies and, so to speak, gentlemen, the suggestion was made to my wife that I should give a popular lecture here for charity. Well, why not? If I must lecture, I must, that's all. It's all one to me. I'm not a college professor, it's true. I can't say I have a university degree, but, nevertheless, I've worked on scientific problems for thirty years, much to the detriment of my health, I might add. Thirty years work on strictly scientific problems! I'm very fond of abstract reasoning. From time to time, I even write scientific articles, well, not strictly scientific, but, if you'll pardon the expression, approximately scientific. Incidentally, I wrote quite a long article only the other day. It's called: The Harmfulness of Certain Insects. My daughters like it a lot, especially the part about bedbugs. But I just read it through and tore it up. What's the use? What difference does it make whether such things are written or not? You still have to use insect powder. We have bedbugs even in the grand piano. . . .

As the subject of my lecture this evening, I have chosen: The Harmfulness of Tobacco. The damage done by tobacco to the human race. I'm a smoker myself, but my wife told me to give a lecture on the harmfulness of tobacco, so there's nothing else for it. If I must lecture on tobacco, I must, that's all. It's all one to me. As for you, ladies and, um, gentlemen, I want to appeal to you to take my lecture very, very seriously. If you don't, pretty terrible things can happen to me. But if anyone here present doesn't like the thought of a dry, scientific lecture, he may put on his hat and go home.

ERIC BENTLEY, *Drama Critic of New Republic and Brander Matthews Professor of Dramatic Literature at Columbia University, is author of numerous works on drama, including The Playwright As Thinker, A Century of Hero Worship, The Dramatic Event, In Search of Theatre, and most recently, What Is Theatre?*

*Adjusts his waistcoat.*

Is there a doctor present? If there is, I want him to pay particular attention: I may be able to teach him something. Tobacco, in addition to being very harmful, is used in medicine. For example: place a fly in a snuff-box, and what happens? It drops dead. Why? Well, I suppose it has a nervous breakdown. . . .

Tobacco, speaking very generally, is a plant. . . .

Yes, I know, when lecturing before an audience, I blink a little bit, my right eye blinks. Pay no attention, it's just nervousness. I'm a nervous man, speaking very generally. This blinking began in 1889. On the 13th of September, to be absolutely exact. The day my wife presented me with our fourth daughter, Barbara. All our daughters were born on the 13th. . . .

However,

*Looking at his watch,*

the time at my disposal this evening is strictly limited and I musn't stray from the subject of the lecture. . . .

I think I should tell you that my wife runs a music school and also a private boarding school, well, not a boarding school precisely, it's really a . . . well, it is a kind of boarding school. Between you and me, my wife likes to tell people how hard up she is, but she's put something away for a rainy day, I'd say forty or fifty thousand, oh yes. As for myself, I haven't a ruble, I haven't a kopeck. But why talk about that? My sphere of influence, so to speak, is the housekeeping. I do the marketing, keep an eye on the servants, write up the accounts, stitch the exercise books together, exterminate as many bedbugs as possible, take my wife's lapdog for walks, catch the mice. . . . One of my little duties last night, for instance, was to issue butter and eggs to the cook for today's dinner. To make pancakes with. Well, to cut a long story short, when the pancakes were ready—today, that is—my wife comes to the kitchen and says three of the girls can't have pancakes because they have swollen glands. So it looks as if we have quite a few pancakes too many! What to do with them? At first, my wife tells me to put them in the pantry. Then she thinks it over a minute, and says to me: "Oh, eat them, eat them, you dumbbell!" When she's in a bad mood, she calls me dumbbell. Or viper. Or Satan. Now, what sort of a Satan am I? Eh? She's *always* in a bad mood. I didn't eat those pancakes, I swallowed them. I wolfed them down without chewing. I'm always hungry. Yesterday, for example, she gave me no dinner at all. "A dumbbell like you," she said, "doesn't deserve a dinner." . . .

However,

*Looks at his watch,*

I see I have strayed a little from the subject of the lecture . . .

To proceed . . . though I know you'd all rather hear a love song. Wouldn't you? Or some symphony or other? Or an aria?

*He breaks into song.*

Hear ye the battle cry?

Forward! Be strong!

I don't recall where that comes from. . . . Incidentally, I forgot to tell you what I do besides the housekeeping. I teach mathematics, physics, chemistry, geography, history, tonic sol fa, literature . . . and so on. My wife charges extra for singing and dancing, though the teacher of singing and dancing is your humble servant. Our address is Five Dogs Lane, Number 13. That's probably the reason I'm a failure—living at Number 13. My daughters were all born on the 13th. I think I told you. Our house has 13 windows . . . but why go on?

Appointments with my wife can be set up at any hour. The prospectus can be had for 30 kopecks from the janitor.

*Takes brochures out of his pocket.*

I can let you have them right now, if you like. 30 kopecks a copy. Who'd like one? Well . . . 20 kopecks.

*Pause.*

What a shame!

Yes, Number 13. I seem to be no good at anything. And now I've grown old and stupid. Just look at me, giving a lecture, to all appearances all very happy and bright, but, inside, I'd like to scream at the top of my voice, I'd like to run away to the ends of the earth! There's no one I can open my heart to. I often feel like crying. What about your daughters, you say? Well, what about them? I tell them all this, and they just laugh! . . . We have seven daughters. Sorry, six. No, it's seven. Anna, the eldest, is twenty seven. The youngest is seventeen. Ladies and gentlemen,

*Looks around,*

I'm unhappy, I've grown to be a fool, a nonentity, but at the same time you see before you the happiest of fathers! That's how it *should* be, and who am I to say it isn't? Oh, if you only knew! My wife and I have been together thirty-three years, and I am glad to report they were the best years of my life. Well, not the best, but, speaking very generally. . . . They have passed, in a word, like a single happy moment and, strictly speaking, well, curse them, curse them all!

*Looks around.*

I don't think she's here yet. No, she isn't: I can say what I please! I'm frightened of her. I'm frightened when she looks at me. Well, as I was saying, my daughters are pretty slow about getting themselves married, probably because they're shy and men can't get

near them. My wife doesn't like giving parties, she never invites anyone to dinner, she's stingy, ill-natured, shrewish. . . . That's why no one ever comes to see us. Let me tell you a secret.

*Comes down to the footlights.*

Christmas and Easter, you can meet our daughters at their aunt's house. Their aunt's an old lady with rheumatism. She wears a yellow dress with black spots that look like beetles. Covered all over with black beetles.

*In a whisper.*

Refreshments are served! You can eat! And when my wife isn't on hand, you can . . .

*He raises his fist to his lips.*

I get drunk on one glass, and, you know, I feel so wonderful, and at the same time so sad, I can't tell you how sad! I remember my youth for some reason or other. And I feel like running away. Oh, if you only knew how I long to run away!

*With enthusiasm.*

To run away, throw everything over, and never, never look back! Where to? It doesn't matter! Anywhere! Just to be away from this stupid, petty, wicked MISER, my wife, who's been tormenting me for thirty-three years! To get away from the music, the kitchen, and all her money! From this silly, trivial life we lead! And to stop, somewhere far away, in the middle of a field, to stand there under the wide, wide heavens like a tree, a post, a scarecrow, and watch the bright, gentle moon overhead and forget, just forget. . . . Wouldn't it be wonderful not to remember *anything*? You know what I'd like to do now? Take my coat off! This miserable old coat that I wore at my wedding thirty-three years ago and that I'm still wearing to give lectures in for charity!

*He tears it off.*

Take that, coat!

*He tramples on it.*

And that! I am old, poor, pathetic—like this waistcoat that's all shabby and worn behind.

*He turns around to show the back of his waistcoat.*

It's not that I want anything. I'm better than this, I'm a superior sort of man, and at one time I was young, intelligent, I went to the university, I had my dreams, I thought of myself as a human being. . . . Today, I don't want *anything*, unless it's peace and quiet—peace, quiet, rest.

*He looks around, and quickly puts on his coat.*

I'm afraid my wife's in the wings, waiting for me.

*Looks at his watch.*

My time's up. . . . If she asks you, will you tell her the lecture was . . . will you tell her that fool of a husband. . . . I mean, that I . . . conducted myself with dignity?

*Looks towards the wings, clears his throat.*

She's looking at me.

*He raises his voice.*

In view of the fact that, um, tobacco contains the terrible poison which I have just described, it is best to refrain from smoking under any and all circumstances. And I hope I may conclude, so to speak, that my lecture on the Harmfulness of Tobacco will have been of some use to you. That's all. Dixi et animam levavi.\*

*He bows and stalks majestically out.*

\* "I have spoken and got a load off my mind." But, since the lecturer would not openly say this in the presence of his wife and audience, the line must not be delivered in English. A "lecturer," Professor Leon Stilman advises me, is probably a graduate of a classical Gymnasium; in which case he would have had eight years of Latin. [E. B.]

*Naphtali Kupferberg*

## Of Some Not Even

How of some not even a word is left  
Of some a line.  
And some have left one poem or two  
To bind them into time.

How of some not even a cat is left  
Of some two daughters and some kine.  
And some have left one lovely son  
To mind them into time.

How of some not even a whore is left  
Of some six wives in wine.  
And I have left your calmswept face  
To wind me into time.

## Recent North Carolina Poetry

Selected, with an introduction by

ROY C. MOOSE

Cyril Connolly, under the guise of Palinurus, begins his book *The Unquiet Grave* with the statement that "The more books we read, the sooner we perceive that the true function of a writer is to produce a masterpiece and that no other task is of any consequence." However, if this were true, there would be few if any books in the world, and more to be regretted, there would probably be no masterpiece in existence. The most important lesson that literary history has to teach us is that the creation of masterpieces owes much to the preceding efforts of men incapable of such creation.

Certainly, I do not consider the following poems to be masterpieces; but I do believe that these poems by contemporary North Carolina writers are significant and representative of new poets, not only in this state, but in the nation as a whole. They are significant in that they reveal a trend, in its early stage, that poetry seems to be taking.

The most outstanding characteristic of the poems is their lyricism, a lyricism that is in the main stream of English poetry. It is a lyricism that has been kept alive for the past thirty years by such men as Robert Graves and Robert Frost, occasionally so by e. e. cummings and W. H. Auden, and rarely by T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, the latter two being the main influences on the eclecticism of poets in the twenties and thirties. The return to lyricism, as a reaction, can be noticed in England, France, Italy, and Germany as well as in America; and the path taken seems to be that of lyrical romanticism.

Another significant characteristic of the following poems is the lucidity and clarity of expression. One gets the impression that the poets really *know* what they want to say and *work* to convey the exact meaning to the reader. As a result, one will find little in these poems that is obscure or obtuse.

Although possessing the common trait of lyricism, the poems are as different as their individual authors. They did not emerge from stereotyped moulds. Basically, if one desires categories, they can be divided into three distinct types. The first four poems, by Thad Stem, Julian Mason, Charles Edward Eaton, and Helen Bevington, are essentially lyrical romanticism. In the next poem Alma Graham is primarily a word-maker who is trying to find new word combinations in the manner of the Anglo-Saxon kenning or the language of Gerard Manly Hopkins. Finally, the poems of Macon Cheek and Frederic Young are more conventional and conservative in form. Mr. Cheek achieves unity of tone and subject matter through the use of archaisms such as "winged," while Mr. Young utilizes the Spenserian stanza as a mould for a Southern elegy in the modern idiom which is distinguished by the use of local place names in Salisbury, N. C.

In the first issue of the present magazine of *the Carolina Quarterly*, the *North Carolina University Magazine* of March 1844, the editor wrote, "We have no great poets . . . none worthy of the political grandeur of our country." Today, over one hundred years later, this statement is still true of North Carolina. Perhaps those who are writing at present, and they are in the main stream of English poetry, will provide the direction for or emerge as that creator of a masterpiece that Cyril Connolly esteems so highly.

*Thad Stem, Jr.*

### Interlude in April

Let us tread softly as if breeze blown,  
The earth is too fragile for walking.  
Gently touch the day with the merest whisper  
For finger-tips would bruise the sky.  
Let there be no sound but the earth's murmuring  
And glide on tip-toe to greet the sunrise.  
For the earth is a holy place this hour  
A temple of dreams that words would break.

Tomorrow will come the resounding hosannas  
And we shall leap to clasp the sunrise  
With tumultuous shouts and lusty bear hugs.  
We shall eat the trees and drink the creeks  
And play marbles with the hillsides.

But today we shall sit enthroned in silence  
With tiny miracles more numerous than raindrops  
And mightier than all the seas.

*Julian Mason*

### Return

Two years can grow  
A lot of grass and drive  
The color into the scene  
Until the fading flow  
Of memory's strive  
Sees the spot eternal green  
And forgets the browns  
And bare-limbed tone  
Of other days and hours.  
So it is with towns  
Or dreary monotone,  
Now turned to memory's flowers.

*Charles Edward Eaton*

## Historical Romance

In every love there is a hall  
That leads unto a place of no recall.  
Down one gropes or runs or flees  
And what one leaves or one would seize  
Was always there in your surmise  
At that first reading of impassioned eyes.

This door redolent of flesh, the final one of flowers—  
Bring the image close, they caution, make it dense;  
The story is nothing if not tense:  
A real woman at large though she lie dead in the first turn.  
The great drama of flowers glows red from burial urn;  
It matters scarcely at all whether she were rich or poor  
of powers.

Or so they say. The story is in the tension.  
And yet in that swart, final, crucial place,  
I seem to remember high rivalries others do not mention.  
There was a sudden, startling stop to plot,  
Surmise gave up its passion, ill-begot,  
Armor trembled for its bones, walls clattered, sword and mace,  
As though a barony aroused itself and shook  
These latest ones, mistaken, and mistook.



Helen Bevington

## Turner's Sunrise

I miss the sun. Especially this winter  
In London is a famine of the sun.  
One reads the *Times* for glitter in Majorca,  
For news of Naples being shone upon,  
Sunlight in Tunis, and is no content.

Or one looks twice at emeralds and sapphires  
In Bond Street windows in the London mists;  
Or wanders through the Tate, where sun exists  
In retrospect—as liquid fire to Turner,  
And as a god to the Impressionists.

There one is like the visitor who stood  
With Turner once before a gold sunrise,  
Questioning its verisimilitude.  
It was no sun that he could recognize.  
“But,” answered Turner, “don’t you wish you could?”

## The Bond

Tender along the bond that flowed the growing  
Run impulses, and slip inside of me  
And fall all eager sliding over me;  
Sweeten the air, dream to a flavored freshness  
Beat in the air, laughing, candy-winged  
Singing the child, and nonsense, and the love  
Vivid along the bond that flowed the growing.

That flows—spilling like music, sweet to eyes—  
Beat, beating waters, urging me again  
All tumble-heady, fall the mountains down;  
Head bent, then up—amid the waters, clean,  
Face cupped, and bubbling out a song to hands,  
Blowing air happy wet, the droplets drinking  
Tangy, and tremble savored, quickening . . .

Quick still and quicker, rush me, water-deep  
Further than falling; pour me down again  
Streaming and steaming; flame a hurt to me  
Force me fierce-rippled, vibrant more than down—  
More, more—and burning through the very bond—  
Out of it . . . source the growing, take, full flow,  
Throb all the swelling waters into me.

Break. And the torrents crushing to my head,  
Break. And the rolling death all down my head,  
All Power pulsing; stream, and the face too full,  
Slapped to the waters, stinging, spilling; heave—  
Back, but the pushing floodsdawn, heavy-lunged;  
Out, stagger aching . . . run, but the legs lashed dry  
Sapped of the waters, weakening, slipping; lose.

And feel the white hand groping for its life;  
And the blank skin drained out of all its life  
Wondering, prickling; the face sleepy-mouthed  
Trying a whisper, stretching to the quiet—  
Until, far off, great lapping echoes surge  
Up and wash inward; and my fingers wake  
To worship at the bond that flowed the growing.

## Charity

Here it is Saint Francis stood  
Blessing creatures of the wood  
Field or plain. They heard him preach  
And each in his own proper speech  
Understood his winged words.  
Circled round him wildest birds  
Shyest animals of the glen  
Most forsaken among men  
Most disconsolate and lonely  
Of God's creatures all. He only  
Understood them and they him  
As he stooped and gathered them  
Into his fraternity  
Of selfless love and charity.

Though this bitter age must fail  
To comprehend such miracle  
Let none scoff it; or deny  
How these orphans of the sky  
Changelings of the wood and sea  
Outcasts of humanity  
Comprehended each his way.  
For no cynic there said nay  
To love's wisdom as love spake  
On sunlit hill through tangled brake  
To God's creatures nurtured brood  
In language which all understood  
Love's universal language large  
As soaring mountain or sea's marge.

*Frederic Young*

## A Southern Elegy

(T. McD., d. 1954)

### I

Earth sleeps. Listen, how still the crystal rite  
Of winter reign has hushed this city's soul.  
An ardent moonfall casts day's court to trite  
Exquisite skeletons—dumb parable  
For days—and stars, suspending darkness' cowl,  
Betray the ancient elms of Jackson Street.  
Like bony priests to some dead oracle,  
These trees, cursed with their vows, may not repeat  
The secrets that two centuries left about their feet.

### II

Tonight frost flags my breath to stay its flight,  
To keep a mitred bronze or marble world  
Where ghosts may stir: I dream the moon-sown night  
When death, soldiering for fortune, whirled  
You like a playmate by the hand, churled  
As Mancha's knight, down his enchanted hill.  
Yet nothing mourns tonight, elms, stars nor world,  
Nor does the Moon Maid, hunting as she will,  
Unbind her temples, weep, or spare her silver kill.

### III

I pace upon the Presbyterian Green  
And dare the moon. Her marvelous noble face,  
As pale and proud as fine old linen seen  
Laid fair, appears: I dream your mother's face.  
Tonight the moon and dreams take of her grace;  
Heart wild, I fancy she who scolded when  
Your wicked genius lightly gave disgrace  
To Lee does now, now smiles; O southern Don,  
Your quaint and creaking steed sought fields a dragon's won.

### IV

But years and you make little change, for time  
Moves in the South as if beneath still water,  
As willows hang: this province's streets, where Graham  
And Woodson and a Gregory still saunter

Lawyer's Row, look ever South; our soldier  
Stands as he has stood, iron and lean  
Against the dragon's will. Yes, he was stronger  
Than your gentle puns, though you had seen  
How years and years of rain could change his gray to green.

V

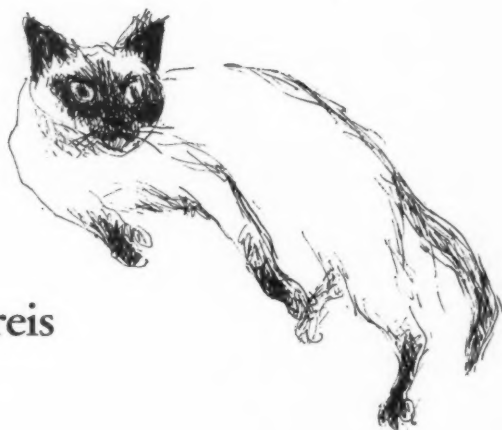
Yet Autumn's golden floodgates have released  
Again her paint-mad maids to golden strew:  
The summer gift has chastened and increased.  
Good Autumn—"O my South must winter too,"  
She warned, "she must be gracious under snow."  
You knew that ghosts may walk through southern rain  
And snow, leaving footprints as they go;  
You conjured them; your talk would entertain  
Then as they walked; now they and earth have taken gain.

VI

Beautiful boy, things move westward. West  
The cold lights wheel a wide regardless arc,  
And west enthalls the virgin huntress' breast.  
Tonight the world is dragoned and is dark!  
Our loves have wed the dragon: his, the stark  
Star-incontinent sky, for nothing's sake,  
Must wend its train, earth, elms and moon, to dark.  
Let east ascend; content, our land will make  
A bronze or marble pose to mark the dragon's wake.

ROY C. MOOSE is a former editor of the *Carolina Quarterly* and Oxford scholar. Mr. Moose now teaches English at the University of North Carolina . . . THAD STEM, JR., author of *Picture Poems* (1949) and *The Jackknife Horse* (1954), lives in Granville County. . . . JULIAN MASON of Williamston, N. C., now serving with the army in Germany, published his first volume of poems, *The Search Party*, in 1953. . . . CHARLES EDWARD EATON is the author of three books of verse: *The Bright Plain* (1942), *The Shadow of the Swimmer* (1951), and *The Greenhouse in the Garden* (1955). He has taught creative writing at the University of Missouri and the University of North Carolina. His fourth volume of poetry, *The River of Heracleitus*, is nearing completion. . . . HELEN BEVINGTON, professor of creative writing at Duke University, published her third volume of light verse, *The Changing Sky*, this year. Her poems frequently appear in the *Atlantic*, *American Scholar*, and *New Yorker* magazines. . . . ALMA GRAHAM of Raleigh, a former student of Randall Jarrell's poetry workshop at Woman's College, University of North Carolina, is now studying at Chapel Hill. . . . MACON CHEEK, professor of English at the University of North Carolina, is author of *Seraphic Dust* (1942), a collection of his poems. . . . FREDERIC YOUNG of Salisbury, N. C., has contributed verse to *Modern Writing* magazine. He now teaches school in Levittown, Long Island.

Morton Zelenko



## Nereis

The cat was Siamese, a soft graceful thing of gray and black forever crouching shyly with its small legs taut and the gray hairs on its arched back short and bristly. It had a tiny simian face with a black button of a nose, a childish pink mouth, and huge, unblinking, frightened eyes. But alive with color and depth as its eyes were, they seemed too artificial to be beautiful.

Joyce Greenwood loved to hold her cat's face between her hands and stare into these strange eyes.

"They're mirrors," she would say seriously, peering within. "Not cat's eyes at all. Nothing more than cold glass."

In that tight-knit section of Rome known as the foreign quarter—the perimeter of which extended from the El Greco cafe to the American Express to the Quirinetta English-speaking cinema to the bar of the Hotel Excelsior—Joyce and her cat were fast becoming as imposing a twosome as playwright Tennessee Williams and his Cadillac convertible drifting through the Roman streets.

She stood five-feet-eleven in her flat-bottom sandals, and she stood straight and tall, flaunting her height, never condescending to slouch when speaking to a shorter person, for this would constitute an irreparable breach in her pride, and she wore pride like a flag.

MORTON ZELENKO has studied at City College and Piscator's Dramatic Workshop in New York, and the Sorbonne and Academie des Grands Chaumières in Paris. He has been a graduate chemist, engineering assistant, technical writer-editor, business magazine editor, literary agency editor, radio writer-director, theatrical producer and playwright. "Nereis" is his first published story.

She was much admired in the small and, in a sense, incestuous Roman artistic coterie. At least she was all of a cut, never liable to irritate by an unpredictable quirk of temperament, never subject to sudden moods of sarcasm, loneliness or joy. Her personality wafted like an unrippled current of cold air above everyone, supremely integrated and self-sufficient, laughterless and tearless.

"I simply can't stand blubbering," she told me once. "There's something obscene about people parading their emotions in public. If they want to dribble and drool, let them do it behind closed doors where there's no one to disgust but themselves."

In Rome, Joyce had many acquaintances but only one friend, a single honor that fell to me out of simple seniority, since I was the only one who had known her since her arrival in Paris three years before. I never dribbled and drooled in her presence. Also, Joyce considered me her friend by virtue of the fact that love between us was impossible.

This, she explained, was the natural result of my being two inches shorter. A hard fact of nature.

"Nothing to be ashamed of," she reassured me. "I just like my men big."

That at once eliminated most of the men in Rome, a goodly portion having already been relegated to invisibility in Joyce's eyes by the fact that she did not speak Italian beyond the superficial phrases and amenities necessary to lead a normal existence, and did not care to learn. The chances of finding a companionable man were further narrowed by a refinement of her disdain for overt emotion. She did not like being courted.

She could, she explained once, tolerate almost anything in a man but blatant love-hunger, the kind of thing that made them dribble nonsense over the telephone, buy you flowers, or reach for your hand while walking in the street, when all they really wanted was to get you on your back.

"Only a man with enough self-respect not to fall over himself to get me is worth my attention," she said. "I like my men aloof."

Besides myself, the only man she seemed to be seeing a great deal of was Johnny Brown. Whenever they were seen together, the news would get back to me, and they were not seen together too often, but often enough for Joyce. What Joyce did publicly was always a subject of discussion with the Piazza di Spagna Americans. They didn't know what I knew about her, but what they did know was enough to hang much speculation on. And Joyce-Johnny was a teaser.

To a European, accustomed to think in terms of race, Johnny's face typified the American nationality. No mistaking that stereotyped melange of Anglo-Saxon-Teutonic-Celtic that belonged to

the great grass-rooted Middle West. And with all this went a fortuitous nomenclature. Johnny Brown was an almost too-perfect trademark for a mass-produced product.

There in Rome, he was studying art with Di Chirico under the GI Bill of Rights. He was a plodding conservative painter with a penchant for full-length frozen figures immersed in light like watered milk. Three months before, I had met him coming down on the Paris-to-Rome Express. Five minutes after the train had pulled out of the Gare de Lyon, he leaned forward and said: "Pardon me. Want something to read?"

It was a small red volume of Byron's poetry.

I had left a lot of memories behind on Paris' Left Bank and I was sadly toying with them, fashioning them into the what-might-have-been, and I didn't want to talk to anyone, and I especially didn't want to read Byron.

Seeing I hesitated, he reassured me.

"No, go on, it's okay. Don't read much poetry myself. Just picked this up second-hand."

I reasoned it was Byron or conversation, so I chose Byron but feigned reading, for I didn't want the poet's eulogies of womankind to crowd my reveries of Bella Patty. The subterfuge was wasted. Johnny was marching home again and there was no restraining his tales of the true glory.

He and the Fifth Army had slugged it out together from Sicily to the Swiss Alps. All along the western Italian route he was forever pointing out battle sites involving great quantities of men and gore. Lovely hillsides and quiet lakeshores were magically sown with desecrated bodies as I listened, and each anecdote concluded with a detailed account of the violent demise of one of his buddies.

"He was a great guy," Johnny would say then, halting his narrative for one visible moment of overpowering sadness.

He had been a draftsman with a company of consultant engineers when his notice had come, and he had never held a gun in his hand before or seen a corpse, and he didn't mind saying now that he had been scared. But during that first day of action—how could he make me understand?—there was this German squad coming over a hill, and he had let go with his BAR, and the figures had fallen, rolling like sandbags down the slope, and he had stood up and cheered.

That was the day he had become a soldier and he had taken the rest of the war in his stride. It had been a good war for him. It had made him grow up.

"Don't get me wrong. War's hell but a man really finds out what he's all about when it's either him or the other guy and your best friends get all chopped up."



He'd been divorced before leaving the States for post-war Rome, and he was glad his wife hadn't gotten a cent out of him because she was just a bothering little bitch who wouldn't let him alone for a minute. A man can't make anything out of himself with a female like that always sucking around. That's why he'd gotten out fast when they'd demobbed him and come back to this beautiful country where so much had happened to him and he had felt so good.

Now nothing was going to sidetrack him. That *big* thing, did I understand? He wasn't going to be like those poor slobs who came over for sex and called it culture. Oh, sure, he'd take a little of it now and then if it came his way. But he wasn't going to suck around for it. All he wanted was to be left alone to work.

That evening we were in Rome and before separating Johnny asked would I have dinner with him the next evening and I said I would. It was bad enough being there alone in that strange city without Bella, thinking of her all the time, and when that first terrible day passed, I couldn't face the idea of a tete-a-tete with Johnny somewhere in a roomful of people I didn't know, so I called Joyce and invited her to join us. She seemed glad to see me. I wasn't her, but this was what I had probably come for, and the sooner the better.

Later, Joyce confided to me, "Well, he certainly looks like nobody I'd want to get to know, but I admire his singleness of purpose." And afterward Johnny told me, "Well, I can't be working all the time, and she's American and speaks the language and hasn't got the hook out."

So there it was, the beginning of a friendship, and I wished it well, for they deserved each other.

I didn't see either of them for three weeks after that. I wandered around the city poking into ruins and museums, seeing Bella turn every corner, and coming to all sorts of decisions I knew I'd never keep. The days drip-dripped like a leaky faucet, and then one evening I was sitting in a gloomy corner of the cafe El Greco with three Italian cognacs in me, wondering how many more it would take to shut out the bad thoughts or make them good again, when, looking up, there was Joyce.

She was talking to a tableful of people with unaccustomed animation, and, sitting there, feeling the glow and the power in me, I tried hard to render myself invisible, but apparently three cognacs weren't enough, for after a while she saw me. Someone was with her, and it wasn't Johnny, a huge man who moved like a ballet dancer.

"Darling!" Joyce bubbled, patting my cheek. "What have you been up to all this time? You've had me worried. You really

shouldn't do this to your friends. I thought Paris had finally got to you and you'd done something silly. You won't, will you? I mean not before you let me know."

I told her I'd be sure to let her know.

"That's my boy. That's my old-time comrade."

The big man stood beside her, smiling.

"This," Joyce beamed, "is the sculptor Paul Hutchinson. Paul—Harold, and vice versa."

The hand that swallowed mine was strangely soft, delicate, and moist.

"Very happy to know you," Hutchinson said.

He had a squarely-chisled head with a lawn-mowed stubble of sandy hair on top. When he smiled—and he seemed to be always smiling—his full, wet lips spread like taffy across his face.

"Paul is making a bust of me," Joyce announced. "Aren't you, dear? Very Henry Moore-ish, but Paul says it's me and who am I to argue with a genius?"

"She's a patient little girl," Hutchinson said. "I give her one five-minute break every hour and she doesn't ask for more. All my models should be that dandy."

He had a soft high-pitched voice that kept slipping out of register, and when he spoke he gave you a big smiling three-quarter view of his handsome profile.

"Paul has a wonderful atelier facing the river," Joyce said. "You really must come up and watch us work."

I said that I was writing furiously but would try to visit them one day soon.

A slim young boy with a dark beautiful face came in and stood alone. Paul stared.

"Paul, dear," Joyce said, suddenly tense. "Would you please ask the cashier if he has any American cigarettes? I really can't take any more of these *Nazionali* today. Camels, pet."

Joyce followed his huge back moving away, her eyes convoying it safely through the crowd.

"He's so much the child," she said then, sitting down. "Enormous talent but he'd let it go to pot if there weren't someone pushing him. He's going to make quite a splash some day. Really a complicated boy. A maze."

The maze evoked obscene pictures in my mind, and I got all stirred up and warm inside, wondering what an afternoon at Paul's would be like.

"Doesn't chase," I said. "Doesn't buy flowers."

Joyce smiled. Paul's smile. "Well, sometimes flowers. I never objected to flowers, pet. I simply don't like the way they're given by certain people I could mention."

"Love's trembling fingers," I said, "can shake the goddam petals right off a rose."

"I've watched it happen many times."

"You've got yourself a big one this time."

"Gargantuan," Joyce smiled. "And you're looped to the ears."

She was wearing a frilly white blouse atop the usual long black skirt, and her lips were done very pink and her face creamy, and the cap of her silvery-brown hair with its classic chignon seemed the slightest bit awry. But these were the surface transformations, a feminine cloak carried in deference to her new-found titillation. Within, Joyce was the same. Within, she would always be the same. I could see the real Joyce sitting straight and superb before me, beneath the lipstick, beneath the frills. Proud, forceful and alone.

"And the party of the third part?" I asked. "Where is she?"

"Whom?" Joyce mocked. "To whom are you referring?"

"I am," I said, "referring to Nereis."

"Home. At Paul's place. The darling's in bed waiting for us."

"Doesn't mind being alone?"

"Not in the slightest."

"Isn't afraid of the dark, that sweet little girl?"

"Why should she be? No one's ever hurt her. She's never allowed it."

"Small pleasures, small pains."

She feigned a long dramatized look at my face.

"What's ever got into you tonight? I'll go if you want me to. I mean do *you* mind *not* being alone?"

"Yes," I said. "Also no and maybe. And have you taken a good look at what's got into you?"

"Oh, dear. You *are* really soused."

"But are you," I pressed "really spoused?"

She liked that. "The three of us," she grinned.

"Yes," I said. "Oh, yes. Oh, yes."

"A very nice arrangement," Joyce smiled.

Daisy-chain of the half-dead, I thought. The indifferent in love with indifference.

I couldn't fight it any longer, and the memories crowded in and sat down beside us there in the El Greco, the beards and the haircuts looking like St. Germaine des Pres, the bad paintings on the wall, the waiters speaking French, the dry Martinis and Cinzanos, the incessant chatter of art and the better, the loftier way of life. . . .

They had met as models at Christian Dior. For six months they had shared a curious circular room in the Hotel Louisiane on Rue de Seine until Joyce one day turned up with a thin-mouthed and

angular Frenchman announcing she was married and a Countess. So the roommates were separated and Joyce went off to a honeymoon in Switzerland and Bella seemed suddenly susceptible to my advances.

She was a strange and beautiful wraith of a woman, eternally wandering childlike among her dreams, and there was a marvellous affinity between her and growing things, and her lovely face would never be more radiant or her small tinkle of a laugh more exquisite than when she was with flowers and trees, pointing them out in genuine friendship, telling me their names.

I never did learn about her background. I didn't care. I think she was born somewhere along the Pacific coast, and I suppose not too far back in her family history there had been an Oriental, but she never told me and I never pressed her. Looking at her sometimes, I'd be reminded of one of those lovely Chinese watercolors of a young girl in a garden under a pale-rose-tinted sky, the girl a shade less than human, the flowers a bit more than inanimate, and the whole possessed of a hushed fragility capable of being dispersed by a breath.

One afternoon Bella called and said they were redecorating Dior's and everybody had been let off and would I like to join her for a day in the country. It was April, and my blinds were drawn against the sun and the blue sky as I labored mightily to bring forth a literary mouse that my agent, in all her wisdom, had said would net me a fast few hundred. This was a story I had written many years before about a boy who met a girl in a Kafkaesque setting and lost her to a fate that was beyond his understanding. It didn't sell, of course, not even to the little reviews, but the slicks were now publishing exotic stuff of that nature, she, my agent, had written, except that it would have to be girl-meets-boy and the ending would have to be a happy one.

I told Bella I didn't know, that I was sweating for the both of us, but she took me too seriously and said she was really sorry because it was such a lovely day and she had wanted to show me the Garden of Sceaux.

I said I'd meet her at the station in fifteen minutes.

She was standing all alone in the middle of that huge chamber with men staring at her as they went by, and I went up to her and we smiled at each other for a moment without saying anything, and then we turned into the gateway and caught our train.

Sceaux is a neat little community in the great Banlieu of Paris, and on its fringe is a broad expanse of stately garden dating back to the gilded days of Louis Quatorze, superbly classic with its quiet paths, its stone stairways, its Grecian urns, its statues of naked Goddesses.

Bella had brought me a bag of fresh apricots, and I ate them slowly as we walked along in the sun, enjoying life, happy to be with her again, looking forward to a quiet supper in one of those centuries-old inns that could always be found and the clean room upstairs with the big old-fashioned bed that I'd ask for when the *patron* brought our coffee.

We came upon the lake, a still jewel in a setting of white stone and the cypresses tall as sentinels all about.

Bella was standing beside me, but she was far away in that great sweet stillness, and I wanted to be where she was, and I kissed her, gently, just a touch of a kiss on her warm cheek. She came back to me then, came back like a sparrow shot in flight.

"Why did you have to do that?"

I didn't want the dream of possession to slip from me. I didn't want the illusion to die.

I smiled. "To keep you company. I was lonely."

She sighed and turned back to the gentle slope beyond the lake.

"Can't you understand?"

I did, but I didn't want to. I didn't want anything to spoil what was to come later.

"Bella," I smiled, taking her shoulders, standing close, "Who am I?"

She didn't say my name as she usually did at this our private whimsy.

"Oh, I do remember you. It isn't that I don't remember."

"I could see by the sadness on her face that there would be no supper and no afterward. I loved her and I had hurt her in some secret masculine way, for she was always being hurt secretly from causes I did not understand and always suffered pains I could not name.

"It's too beautiful," she said. "Didn't you know it was too beautiful?"

Not here, she was saying. Wait for a room for your kisses. Rooms were made for people, for their small passions and nakedness. The sun and the sky and the lake are too perfect to suffer human defilement.

When she saw my face, she moved to me, touching my hand.

"I'm sorry. Come, we should talk."

We sat on the grass and she said, "It's so easy for me to be a coward and run from everything. I just don't want to be hurt. I don't mind physical pain, but that terrible thing nibbling inside when people hurt me, I can't stand that. And if I give too much of myself to anyone, I will be hurt. You're too strong for me. You must try not to love me. Because I could never feel like you do. And then you would be hurt."

We walked back along the leaf-strewn paths, beneath the lush arcades of platanos and oaks, down the smooth slopes of time-worn classic stairways, past the files of Goddesses coyly concealing their perfect torsos in the speckled shade, proud females indifferent to the world, secure and intimate only with each other.

"You're not listening, pet."

Beyond the brilliant rim of my half-emptied glass of cognac, Joyce was smiling.

"Of course I was."

"I was telling you about Paul's virtues."

"I heard every word. Paul's virtues."

"Where were you? Paris again?"

"And the dark side of the moon."

"I thought that was over a long time ago."

I groped for something to say. Something that would tear across that cold beautiful face and disfigure it with human feeling.

"You're really still a boy," Joyce said, leaning forward, touching her long fingers to my cheek. "Some men never lose their boyishness. They never learn to stay away from things that hurt them." She lowered her voice, deliberately, mockingly. "Do you write her?"

"Do not disturb," I told her, "my private keyhole."

I raised my glass, gestured a toast, and drank.

"I must say it's a genuine pity," Joyce went on. "Bella was really fond of you once. I mean, as fond as she can be of any man."

I said: "Dear Joyce."

She smiled. "She wrote me a couple of days ago. I went down to the American Express to pick up my mail and there it was, that funny little scrawl of hers on the envelope with all those afterthoughts underlined in the corners. You remember. And three P.S.'s in the letter. Oh, adorable Bella. Such a tender creature. Was there ever a more tender woman than Bella? Was there, pet?"

"No. Unless it's you, dear heart."

"Oh, I can be tender. Ask Paul. But it's foolish to spread it around."

After a moment, feeling her eyes on me, smiling, waiting, I said, "So now you're on speaking terms again."

She shrugged. "Our little quarrel wasn't so bad. Women fight so easily with other women, but I think they really get a kick out of it. Especially when they make up. Like love, pet. But I don't have to tell you about love."

A waiter came by and I ordered another cognac for myself. Joyce said she wasn't staying long and she didn't want anything. She was looking around for Paul. I couldn't see him anywhere.



"You don't have to tell me about love," I said then.

Joyce turned back to me, her mouth set.

"No, I don't, little man. And that's the truth."

"Go on," I smiled, knowing my advantage now, but knowing she would take it back before long. "Women and their kicks."

"Do you really want all that stinking laundry?"

"If it's yours, my pet."

"Well," she said, her voice hardening, "once upon a time there was this Sleeping Beauty, see, and Bella was lying sleeping with nothing but a G-string on, and, oh dear, look at the sweet boy's face."

The waiter came back and I toyed with my glass, trying not to show anything, but Joyce saw it all.

"All right," she said, relenting. "This is the way it goes. We had an apartment down there in Cannes and she stayed away a couple of nights. I didn't know what to do. I'd been walking thin ice ever since I'd left that dumb oaf of a husband. I didn't want to be forced to look out for anyone but myself. Then one afternoon she walked in. I mean just walked in. Hello, she says, and down she sits. I asked her where she'd been but she clammed up when she saw how sore I was. You know how she is. I suppose I really dressed her down then. Bella bawled. Maybe she'd been doing nothing but sitting on a cliff staring at the sea. Anyway, my bags were packed, and I don't like going back on a decision, so I left."

I hadn't once looked at her face. Now I did. She was feeling it all again, back, back through Bella's tears. But she could not go fast enough. She could not escape me.

Back before Cannes was the honeymoon, the Count and Countess having their happy-ever-after in a Swiss chalet. Then it ended. Then there was the letter.

Everything was finished, Joyce wrote. As long as she lived she would remember what Marcel had done to her. He had ice-water in his veins, and no feelings for anyone else. He treated her as if she were a pleasure machine that he had paid plenty for and expected to get the most out of before it broke down. How she hated men, they were all alike! And then that evening she was feeling all lousy inside and wanted to get a good night's sleep, and he had come in and sat down on the bed with that phony smile and ran his hand down her side, and she had said no, please, and he'd given her that look and got up and slammed the door. After a while she'd gotten up and dressed and went out to find him and apologize, and there he was at the Casino, grinning down the dress of a wealthy Dutch widow, the second night of their marriage. She'd gone back

and lain awake all night waiting for him, but he didn't get in until morning. You stupid woman, he had told her, do you think you can play with me like you would with an American boy on your mother's couch? What a fool she had been for thinking it could work, Joyce wrote. Now she knew it had been impossible from the start. She'd really known it even before he'd proposed, but she'd known such things before and yet kept sleepwalking into messes with men. This time she wouldn't forget. . . . She missed Bella awfully. Cannes was hell alone.

"She needs me," Bella had said, sitting small and sad on a footstool in my room.

I did not turn from the window. Nothing I could say would do any good. Bella felt her way through life, and I thought too much through mine, and what I was thinking now of Joyce wouldn't make much sense to Bella if I told her. All this Joyce deliberately invited upon herself, I could say, using a quiet confident tone that would color my wisdom with humility. The patient, Joyce Greenwood, is subconsciously picking out her path to an inevitable destiny. All the tears and anguish sustained along the way were the self-imposed elimination of those paths over which she knew she did not want to go. Note the patient's letter. A sleepwalker. In human affairs, ladies and gentlemen, the safest evolutionary route is a slow curve, and man thus travels circuitously on a strict subconscious level. Someday, I say someday, the patient will come to understand the true face of her personality, and then the pain would stop, because self-deception had stopped.

Across the room, Bella, not having heard, remained unmoved. "I love you, Bella," I said, not turning to her, for if I did I would kiss her and she would not respond.

Bells were tolling the hour all over the city. Notre Dame was dark and spidery against the early-evening sky. Bella remained silent.

The next day I saw her off at the station. The train rolled slowly away, and her hand waved briefly out the window, and then she was gone. A solitary word struck over and over in my head like the flowering sound of a Chinese gong. Forever. Forever.

"Well, the short and long of it is our Bella is happy on the *Cote*. Anyway, she says she's happy and you know she's not a very good liar. Shuttles between Nice and Monte Carlo, modelling, making out. Sweet Bella. I can see her walking along the beaches at night, quite alone and loving it."

"Sweet Nereis."

Joyce looked surprised, but only for a moment.

"Friend Harold scribbling away while I babble on the couch.



Now let me examine that penetrating observation. Now maybe you've shot yourself a bull's eye. Maybe we're four of a kind. A species."

"Daisy chain."

"Do not," Joyce said, "slobber in the gutter. You really ought to get yourself a nicely-stacked girl."

Paul Hutchinson came up behind her.

"Luckies. I asked for Camels but they didn't have them."

Joyce fed him a perfectly precise smile.

"I thought you'd deserted me, darling."

"Just somebody I knew once," Hutchinson said. He was too casual as he opened the pack of cigarettes and offered her one.

Joyce paled. She reached for his huge soft hand and held it tightly. She was studying his face, hungrily, fearfully.

"Paul, for God's sake—"

"Stop it," he said quietly. "Don't start anything here."

"You told me. Paul, you told me."

He smiled at her then, his big meaningless smile with the white teeth and the striking profile and the pink wet mouth.

"Shall we go?" he asked. "Come, we'll go home."

She released his hand. Then, remembering me, her fingers went to her hair, smoothing it. She smiled at me, apologetically perhaps, wistfully perhaps, wondering whether I understood, whether I sympathised.

"See you soon, pet. Paul is in the phone book. Give us a ring one day please."

I told her yes. Will do.

I watched their odd, towering figures moving away, thinking what a noble-browed race they could breed for tomorrow's world.

I had no intention of accepting her invitation. She would have liked to use me as she used everyone else. I was part of her happier life and so a small, subtle but useful psychological arguing point in her struggle with Paul. She needed bolstering now that she felt something vital slipping away.

Only sometimes during that next week, I did think of visiting them. Rome is a grand and glorious antique but it can be as empty as a graveyard for the lonely. I needed a lot of bolstering myself. I needed someone like Joyce, for the sick enjoy the agonies of the sick.

Then one afternoon I saw Johnny Brown in the U. S. Information Service Library, and it was decided for me. He was sitting deep between the broad armrests of a leather-upholstered chair, staring solemnly into a large book. I didn't want to talk to him. I knew only too well what the conversation would get around to. But

his long frail figure was so immobile and his small lashless eyes so affixed upon a single page that something stirred in me, something perhaps as much for myself as for him.

"Johnny."

He gave no sign of recognition. I sat down. There on the page was Picasso's haunting *Guernica*. I've always liked it. Now Johnny did, too.

"Funny," he murmured. "I used to think this stuff was phony." And after a moment: "Is something right by itself or is it right only when we're ready for it? Must I feel so lousy inside—" He turned back to the painting, studying it, unpiecing it. Thinking war again, escaping into it like a tired old man escapes into childhood memories of blocks and toys and tin soldiers that never die.

"I ever tell you about how a buddy of mine was run over by a tank?"

I nodded. But he hadn't. Not about this buddy.

"Haven't seen the gang around much," he said after a while, forcing a smile.

"Everybody's fine," I said. "After us the deluge."

"Sure," he said. "Why not?"

"Ran into Joyce the other day."

"That so?"

"Pink petticoats and Chanel behind the ears and that sweet little wiggle when she walks."

"Joyce?"

"The new one. And you should see him, too. A mile high, and they say he's talented."

He looked hard at me. "I know all about it. You didn't have to tell me."

Suddenly I knew what I had to do. There were books, books all around me, stacked neatly on shelves as high as a man's head. And none of them mine. But Johnny was mine, mine to do with as I wished.

"Come on out," I said, touching his elbow.

Paul's studio was atop a six-story white-facaded building overlooking the ugly mud-ribbon of the Tiber. A little white card on the door said in Gothic, "Mr. Paul Hutchinson," and beneath this was an inked figure of a chisel and mallet. There was a little silver chain with an ivory handle at the side of the door, and when I tugged it, a bell tinkled inside.

Then Joyce was standing there, staring at us.

"Oh," she said, expecting someone else, her anger dissolving into embarrassment. "Well, guests. Well, come on in."

We went through a long foyer, past a small kitchenette, and into the studio. Strong sunlight poured in through two huge win-

dows, and a fine golden dust hovered. The thick wet smell of plaster was cooling and pleasant. Paul's figures crammed every available shelf and corner. They were good.

"Sit down," Joyce said solemnly. "I'll get you something to drink."

Now she was wearing a gray tailored suit and a man's shirt open at the neck, and no makeup, and I could see the fine golden fuzz along her cheeks and around her mouth which she had so cleverly learned to conceal. No mistaking also the puffed eyes, the weariness about them. She had been crying. Joyce crying.

Johnny sat down on a wooden stool, crossing his legs and folding his hands in his lap. He was looking at the walls, the floor, the window, at everything but Joyce.

"I haven't seen you," Joyce coldly told him.

He met her eyes for an instant.

"Been working pretty hard."

"Everybody," Joyce said, "is working hard these days. Rome is filled with busy little men all building tremendous careers."

When she had gone for the drinks, Johnny turned to me, looking so hopelessly lost that I really felt sorry for him.

"What's the matter with her? First she tells me I make her sick to the stomach, now she's sore I haven't pestered her like I used to." It was too much for him. He let his head sink down into his hands and squeezed it. "What's the matter with everybody?"

I left him there. In the kitchen, Joyce was nervously twisting a corkscrew into a bottle of cognac, her mouth tight and gray.

"Where's Paul?"

"Paul," Joyce echoed. "Where's Paul?" She made an effort to pull the cork out. "Goddam lousy stinking things! Why don't they put heads on them like we do!" I took the bottle from her and slowly drew out the cork, *pop!* Joyce shivered at the obscenely human sound. "Oh, yes, where's Paul?" she said. "Yesterday somebody comes knocking, so quietly knocking, and there it stands, with its hands straight down its sides, surprised to see *me*. A sweet darling adorable innocent boy. And he asks with his sweet darling cherry mouth, 'Where is Paul, is Paul here?' Paul is so popular, you know, so popular, my Paul. You'd be amazed at how many darling gentleman friends he has in this Eternal City. They seem to be sitting there eternally, all over the place, just waiting for him to show up. He's been gone three days and to sweet Jesus hell with him! To hell with everything!"

I carried the tray of glasses back and Joyce followed with the bottle. A gray and black fur ball was lying in Johnny's lap, and he was petting it clumsily.

"Nereis!" Joyce yelled.

Johnny's legs shot apart and the cat fell heavily to the floor. Joyce ran to it, dropping the bottle.

"Darling, darling," she said, rocking the cat in her hand's cradle. "Has he broken you? Has the bad man broken you?"

I got the bottle. I set it down on the table, drew out the cork, and poured some cognac into a glass. I drank it all down. Then I poured a round of three. I almost poured a fourth.

"Sorry," Johnny said. "I keep dropping things these days."

Joyce faced him, scornful and bitter.

"Listen, mister. You will not call my Nereis a thing. She's better than anybody I've met in this cheesy town. You don't even belong on the same planet with her." She held the cat's face between her fingers and kissed its pink mouth. "Sweet darling. Sweet little girl."

It wasn't amusing anymore. It was a pity to let all this good cognac go. But it wasn't amusing anymore.

"Come on, butterfingers. Hubba hubba."

Johnny got up. He looked fifty.

"Joyce, thanks for the drink," I said. "We just dropped in for a minute anyway. I've got to see somebody and Johnny's got to go home for his nap."

"Now listen," Joyce said. "Don't wisecrack me or I'll start screaming. Just sit down and don't be silly. You can see Nereis is all right. If she weren't I'd know, wouldn't I? It was just an accident and there's no point you feeling insulted. I've been snapping my own head off these past few days. I didn't mean anything by it."

"Sure," I said. "Sure."

"Really now, listen," Joyce cried. "I mean for God's sake listen. I've got to cook supper for somebody tonight." She smiled strainedly at Johnny. "Forget it, please. I'm getting old and my gyroscope's wacky. . . . Say it's okay," she told the cat. "Ask the nice man to stay for supper"

Johnny looked at me.

"Spaghetti, too?" I asked Joyce.

"Oh yes, oh yes," she laughed. "Oh, miles of spaghetti!"

"In that case I suppose it's hopeless to refuse."

"Quite hopeless," Joyce said shrilly. "You know you can't argue with a woman."

She went through the archway and came back with her coat.

"Come on, Johnny. Come help me shop."

"Don't," I said, "go to too much trouble."

"You sit right down and drink yourself into a for-old-times-sake lovely dream. You've got the run of the place and I don't give a damn what you do with it."

"I will smash these heathen idols, scattering their dust."

"When I get back, I'll help you."

"Leave her with me. Nereis. A few simple questions I been meaning to ask."

"Whither I goest, she goest," Joyce smiled.

When they had gone, I straightened the three glasses of cognac I had poured into a soldiers' line and beautifully drilled them with my general's fingers, flanking them left and right and bringing them to a halt *one-two* at the edge of the table. It was a time for serious drinking. I sat down before the table, choosing the tallest of the glasses and making a clean quick business of it. You shouldn't drink when you're unhappy, Bella had said that night when she'd come to my room two hours late. I didn't want to kiss her, lovely as she was in the blue dress.

I got up and went to the window. I concentrated hard on the city of Rome, hoping Bella would go away. Churches dominated the city, churches without number, their spires and stone embellishments lording it over the stunted terra cotta houses of the people. And rising supremely white in the sun, mother guarding its brood, was the ribbed dome of St. Peters. In the pious streets, I knew, and in the pious shops and homes, everywhere you turned and looked, the Madonna and Child gazed down in holy communion with the spiritually pure.

They gazed down on Joyce and Johnny, walking along the quay in the merciless Roman sunshine. What happened then I pieced together from what Johnny told me before he went away.

Deep down she was a vagrant, Joyce unashamedly told him as they walked. A wanderer with absolutely no roots at all. And a moment inevitably came into her life when she knew she must move on. So she was leaving Rome as soon as she could get her things together. She hadn't made up her mind where to go. Paris seemed logical since she could be sure of a job with Dior, but she hated to go back anywhere and face the same people and the same routine. But she'd make her decision soon. She was good at making decisions.

She talked feverishly. Johnny instinctively felt that Joyce needed him then. It gave him a certain courage as he walked silently in the muting haze of his great passion. It had been stupid and weak to let a woman drag him down again. He remembered those months in uniform when that sense of power was pushing big in him. Every time his rifle jerked he could feel the virility of it shiver through his whole body. Now his life was all mixed up again. *You aint even a man*, the voice taunted from out the forgotten past; and silently he rose from the bed and went into the living-room and lay down with a sigh on the couch, hating himself for not beating respect into his wife, getting sicker and sicker as he listened to the child-like whimpers coming through the opened door. No, no more! That

was the old Johnny Brown who punched in at nine, punched out at five, for seventy lousy dollars a week. *You aint even a man.* Stop it, I'm warning you. I'll bust your jaw! *I don't care. I'll say it right to your face because I aint afraid of you.* No, no more. Think of the hard earth and the exploding reds and yellows like paint flung into the Italian sky. Think of your fingers slipping out the pin of the grenade, holding death in your fist, waiting, waiting, until your buddy screams: throw that goddam thing! Throw it! **THROW IT!**

"Joyce," he said quickly. "Something I want to ask you."

And then he proposed marriage.

Joyce stared at the proud way he held that Babbitt head, stared at the squared shoulders and thin straight figure of the Great American Nonentity.

She stopped walking and began to laugh.

"You hear that, Nereis? You hear what the bad man who dropped you said? Shall we take another poppa for you, darling? Maybe we can send him out to catch a little mouse for you now and then."

The tears came through, but the laughter did not stop, and she held her face against the soft warm body of the cat and asked, "Can we stand to have another man with us in the same room? A man with his rough ways and his selfish mind. Nereis, a man like this one?"

Sobbing, Johnny pulled the cat from her, ran crouching to the stone parapet, huddled low with his eyes straining for the target, his left hand straight out before him giving his body balance, his feet set, waiting, waiting. Then the poised right hand clutching the missile looped up. . . .

Joyce wrote asking me to meet her at the station. I found her standing quietly beyond the knot of waiting people.

"I'm glad you came," she greeted me. "You're really all I had in Rome. Funny isn't it, everything considered? You've always hated my guts and I still like you. First time in my life I've got such a one-way deal. *Esprit de corps*, I guess. We're veterans of the same war. Love—your kind, my kind. Are you going to stay on? Write a good book and dedicate it to me. With kisses."

She was wearing her gray tailored suit with a white starched shirt beneath, buttoned at the neck. No jewels, no makeup.

"Do you send your regards?"

"I send them."

She looked tired. It would be a long time before she forgot the little body at the bottom of the Tiber.

Slowly, the Rome-to-Cannes express rolled into the station. The knot of people unravelled and moved through the gate.

"Goodbye," Joyce said. "Have fun. Have your career. Don't fall in love too often."

She held out her hand and I felt it hard against my own. Then our eyes met, and for the first time, standing there silently, it was said between us. No more mistakes. No more sleepwalking.

She picked up her bag, looked at me again for a moment, smiling a parting defiance.

I watched her stride away, tall and inviolate. I turned and started for the exit. I could not walk quickly enough. I knew I never would.

## Sombre Landscape

Grey daylight grieves and grieves;  
all's cursed that once was blessed.  
Forgotten under the eaves:  
the swallows' nest.

The heath, grown mauve and dun,  
of herd and shepherd bereft;  
from woods, dead and foredone:  
no echo left.

O thirst for deepest sleeping,  
all happiness abhorring!  
Shores draped with misty weeping:  
the rain is pouring.

*Kurt Loup*

translated by *Herman Salinger*

KURT LOUP is a Dusseldorf librarian. His book, *Der Golfstrom*, appeared in Germany in 1954.

HERMAN SALINGER, Chairman of the Department of Germanic Language and Literature at Duke University and an editor of *South Atlantic Quarterly*, is author of *Angel of Our Thirst*, 1950, a collection of poems, and editor of *Twentieth Century German Verse*, 1952. His poems and translations have appeared in *Poetry*, *Accent*, *New Mexico Quarterly Review*, *Saturday Review*, and *Western Review*.





DEPOSITION

*Benton Spruance*



Wendell Berry

## The Chestnut Stud

Above the lights and tent tops of the carnival the ferris wheel turned around the moon. The sky, already dark behind the moon, still held a little daylight in the west. O'Donnel watched from the door of the horse barn, where he had come looking for a breeze. But the air outside was as close and hot as it had been in the barn. His sweat-soaked shirt stuck to his back.

In the grandstand at the show ring people were moving about finding seats, the women fanning themselves with horse show programs. Now and then a girl passed near the barn sweating in her summer dress, leaving perfume for a minute in the smell of manure and straw and horse sweat and liniment.

One waved as she went by. "Hello, O'Donnel. You gonna win tonight?"

"Well, hello there," O'Donnel said. "I'm gonna try like hell."

He watched her go out of sight in the crowd.

"What you looking at, O'Donnel?"

O'Donnel turned and winked at the man who had spoken. "Who was that?"

The man set down the riding boot he had been polishing and picked up its mate. "I think she's an Abrams."

"Jack Abrams' girl?"

"I think that's whose."

O'Donnel stood a moment longer, staring at the place he had lost sight of the girl, and started back into the barn. A mare nickered at the far end of the driveway, and a stallion answered.

The man polishing the boot grinned, hearing the quick rustle of straw as the stallion moved to face the mare's cry. "Better say something to your horse, O'Donnel. He ain't got his mind on his business."

The stallion nickered again and kicked the side of his stall. The solid crack of the iron shoe rattled the door latch.

"Woah! You old devil you!" O'Donnel yelled. Then, "He'll be a good one tonight," he told the man. "He's feeling mean as a snake."

WENDELL BERRY, a graduate student at the University of Kentucky, received First Prize in the Carolina Quarterly's Sixth Annual Fiction Contest in May, 1956, for his story, "The Brothers."

"That the way you tell, O'Donnel?"

"Hell, yes. When he's mean he'll make a good show just as sure as the sun coming up. He feels the fire in him then."

"You by yourself, O'Donnel?"

"No. I've got one of my neighbor's kids with me."

"Where's your boy?"

"Billy's quit showing."

"Well, if I can help you, holler."

"I'll do it."

"Luck, O'Donnel."

"Yes sir. Thank you. Luck to you."

The boy was sitting on a bale of hay in front of the stallion's stall, whittling.

"Well, I'll swear," O'Donnel said. "If you got to be lazy on my time, be lazy like a boy, not an old man. When a boy's lazy he's supposed to hide and smoke a cigar, or steal a hen, or pinch the little girls. Damn if I ever saw a boy too lazy to be bad. Get up from there and polish my boots."

The boy laughed and opened the trunk to get the boots. O'Donnel went in the stall after the horse and led him out and hitched him in the driveway.

"Hand me a brush, honey boy."

The boy reached back into the trunk for a brush.

"That's my shoe brush, cabbage-head."

The boy laughed again and found the right brush. O'Donnel kicked him lightly in the behind and began brushing the horse.

The stallion stood high-headed between the two hitch reins that fastened to each side of his halter, snorting and lunging and side-stepping in the short slack of his freedom; but never quite tightening the reins—fighting within them, not against them, as though the man, and not the chain and leather, contained him. O'Donnel moved with the horse, anticipating him, moving at times even before the horse moved, the dark chestnut coat beginning to gleam under the quick, rhythmic strokes of the brush.

A man in a business suit stopped to watch, leaning his hand on the stall door.

O'Donnel nodded his head. "Evening."

"Evening," the man said. "That's a lot of horse you've got there."

O'Donnel laid his hand against the stallion's shoulder. "He's a horse all right."

"What's his breeding?"

"His papers're right there in that trunk. Here, boy, get them papers for this gentleman."

"Henderson's the name."

"Glad to know you, Mr. Henderson. Mine's O'Donnel."

Henderson sat down on the trunk lid and read the papers, then handed them back to the boy.

"Good enough?" O'Donnel asked.

"Plenty good. American Eagle. You don't find much of that line anymore. Where'd you ever get hold of that horse?"

"I found him on a hillside over on the river. The man that owned him just bred his mammy and turned her out and registered the colt when he was born. He was a six-year-old when I got him, and nobody'd ever laid a hand on him."

Henderson shook his head. "I'll bet he was a sonofabitch to break."

"He was. It took me a whole winter before I could do anything with him at all, and there was times I thought neither one of us would live to tell about it. I never took such punishment from a horse. Look here." O'Donnel pulled up his pant leg and showed a red, crooked scar six inches long and an inch wide across the right shin and around the calf. "That time he really got me."

A tall, blond girl walked up the driveway and sat down on the bale of hay.

O'Donnel touched the brim of his hat. "Evening, Kitty. I didn't know you folks were here. You showed yet?"

"Yes, in the second class."

"How'd you do?"

"Tied second."

"Well, that ain't best, but it's good enough. Good enough. You're staying with 'em, and that's what matters."

O'Donnel finished brushing the stallion and stood back to look at him. "His neck is clothed in strength," he said, and laughed, then looked at the girl. "That about says it, don't it?"

"Where'd you read that?"

"A lady showed it to me once in the Book of Job, and said it was like this old horse." He winked. "You know about old Job, don't you? Old Job had what it takes. He had boils on his behind and set on an ash pile. If you don't think that takes guts, you try it sometime."

Henderson smiled and stood up, facing the stallion.

O'Donnel turned to the boy. "Here, boy. Run yonder and get my riding suit out of the truck. Run, now. It's getting time."

"Where's Billy?" the girl asked.

"Billy's quit showing and gone to farming."

"He shouldn't have quit. He was a good rider."

O'Donnel looked at the stallion. "Yeah. Billy was one of the best riders I ever saw go in a show ring. You can't blame him for quitting, though. There's a lot more profit in farming than fooling around with these old horses. Maybe Billy'll have a little money some day." He laughed. "And that'll be more than his Pap ever had."

Somebody led a mare through the barn toward the show ring. The stallion nickered and lunged forward. O'Donnel ducked out of the way and grabbed the halter. "Woah now! Woah!"

"He's still the same as ever," the girl said, nodding toward the horse. "Lord, I don't know how you've kept him from killing you, Mr. O'Donnel."

O'Donnel leaned toward her. "Well, I'll tell you—by being as good a stud as he is."

The girl laughed and started back toward the other end of the barn.

O'Donnel turned back to Henderson. "And that's the trouble. With a horse like this one you've got to *keep* being as good a stud as he is. If I ever quit being as good a one, I'll never be worse, I'll be dead."

"I've got a mare I'd love to breed to him," Henderson said. "What's your fee?"

"Fifty dollars. And you can bring your mare whenever she's ready, Mr. Henderson. Just call and let me know a little before hand." O'Donnel took a clean shirt out of the trunk and ripped off the laundry wrapper. "And listen. If you know anybody on the market for broke horses, I've got a barn full. I'm thinking about selling out. I've got a job in town that keeps me busy in the daytime, and it's getting so it's too hard on me working horses half the night. You know my boy don't help me any more." He shook the folds of the shirt and unbuttoned it.

"That's the way it is," he said, so softly this time that only the boy, whistling again on the bale of hay heard him, and was still a minute, looking at the side of O'Donnel's face.

"What kind of stock you got for sale?" Henderson asked.

"They're a good bunch of horses. Not fancy now—I never had the money to buy the fancy kind. This old stud here's the only horse I ever owned you could call fine, and I just got him by luck. But they're all sound horses that can do the gaits and do them right. I've got one old mare that's as good as most you'll see. My boy showed her all around and did good with her."

"You won't sell this stud before I can breed my mare to him, will you?"

"Aw, hell no. I won't sell him. Just to tell the truth, he ain't broke enough to sell, and I never aimed to sell a horse that wasn't

broke for anybody. You can't break a horse like this one, Mr. Henderson. You can kill him, but you can't beat him, because he just don't know how to get beat. All you can do is be as tough as he is and stay deadlocked with him like I have."

Henderson moved toward the door. "Well, if I see anybody wanting horses I'll sure tell them about you. Good luck."

"Thanks," O'Donnel said. He went into an empty stall and put on the riding suit, then saddled and bridled the stallion.

"What class is it, boy?"

"Ten," the boy said.

"We're next, then. You get a brush and one of them dry rags and go on up by the gate."

As O'Donnel led the horse out the barn door, a white haired man with a bow tie and Panama hat left the crowd at the ringside and came toward him. "Hello, O'Donnel. How're you making it?"

They shook hands. "Just barely, Doc." O'Donnel said. "Just barely. How's yourself?"

"Good enough, I reckon. Where's your boy, O'Donnel? Isn't he showing with you this year?"

"No, Billy's quit, Doc. I reckon I finally must've burnt him out. You know, I started him showing ponies when he was five."

"By God, I'm sorry to hear it. The boy was a fine rider."

"Yeah. Billy was a good rider."

"Well, luck to you, O'Donnel. I'll move along and get out of your way."

The loudspeaker called O'Donnel's class and he mounted. The stallion reared as he felt the man's weight in the stirrup, and reared again when O'Donnel came down in the saddle and took hold of the bit. "Ho, boy! Ho, boy!" O'Donnel said, the words coming like laughter. The stallion pranced sideways toward the ring gate. O'Donnel grinned, watching the crowd fall back out of the way, then turned the horse straight and lifted him into a swift, springy trot as they went into the ring.

He pulled in to the rail and started on the circle. The stallion fought the bit, wanting more speed, and O'Donnel let him have it, feeling the throb of muscle quickening under him—the hooves striking lightly, almost soundlessly on the soft dirt, driving the ground backward. "Hahhh, stud horse!" O'Donnel grinned, speaking under his breath. "Hey-ahhh!"

A man in overalls, leaning on the rail, raised his hand as O'Donnel came by. "Give 'em hell, O'Donnel."

And as he passed the judge the first time he could hear them yelling at the gate: "There's your horse, Judge! Look at that old stud horse, Judge!"

In the barn again, O'Donnel scraped the sweat off the stallion and rubbed him with a towel.

"He was a show horse tonight, boy. He had more to give them than they ever even asked him for." He hung the wet towel on a nail and unbuttoned his shirt collar. "Hand me a cooling sheet, old buddy boy." He took the sheet and spread it over the stallion. "Woah, boy."

Doc came down the driveway of the barn and sat on the trunk. "Well, O'Donnel, I'd have tied you first, but looks like the judge saw it different."

"He was a show horse tonight, wasn't he, Doc?"

"He was, for a fact."

O'Donnel unhitched the stallion and led him out to walk him cool. Outside the door he stopped and called the boy.

"Here. Go get us a couple of Cokes." He dropped two dimes into the boy's hand, and led the stallion toward the empty parking lot beside the show ring. The grandstand was empty, and the crowd on the midway was thinning out, so that now O'Donnel could hear the voices of the Gypsy women calling the late-leavers: "Come in! Come in! Get your fortune told, ten cents! Come in! Know your future, ten cents!"

The boy brought the Cokes back and handed one to O'Donnel. O'Donnel took a long drink, and looked at the boy.

"Tell you what we'll do," he said. "We'll just keep the old mare and breed her to this stud. Maybe we can raise us one of them really good ones."

The boy stared at him for a moment, then wandered off, drinking his Coke.

O'Donnel spoke to the stallion and they moved slowly back across the empty lot, their shadows long in the moonlight.

## Eterne

Consign my mind to salt air and the wind  
let warm trades chase and scatter  
and let the typhoon tear and spread it;  
the gull, the tern, the albatross,  
let ride upon it,  
the sea-fog hug it cold.  
And to the sand, the sea, my bones  
and let the sea make haste with them  
and let the odd fish phosphor  
in a sand sunk skull.

Perhaps in Japan a century or more  
will find a fibula, salt-clean and needlebright  
and beautiful and smooth to feel . . .  
or comes a rib to Borneo  
to polish down and make a toy  
for some dark fisher's child . . .  
or, when today is cryptozoic, might  
a bright being picking in a sea-scored cliff  
strike him a clavicle become a stone  
and turn with reverence this object  
in his grasp and marvel  
at the age of me.



## In Review

Jessie Rehder, *Remembrance Way*. New York: Putnam, 1956.

The Sea, the Shore, the Sea.

Large, quiet rhythms—and these, the three title divisions of a novel by U.N.C.'s Jessie Rehder set the rhythm both for the book's prose and for its plot.

*Remembrance Way* is like the sea, having sometimes so delicate a froth, so thin a breaking wave, that the reader is first impressed most by a filligree of language, only to return again with some surprise to a sense of depth, tide, movement.

The novel opens on shipboard where Abby Brandon, enroute to Africa for some writing and photography, and to some decision about herself and her marriage, lets the tide of thought draw her back into time . . . "rolling with the ship, moving back into that spring when the world was beautiful, or seemed to be. . ."

For in asking herself what she is and why she takes of love so hungrily, Abby must go back to a summer in her adolescence, three months spent at exclusive Green Leaf camp near Flat Rock, N. C. The camp itself is not important; what is important to Abby is the sum of that season's experience. During that brief time in the Appalachian Mountains and within the framework set up by Green Leaf's ways and days, Abby Gregory tips over the precarious balance from childhood, and finds the world strange on the other side.

In the tradition of many modern novels, Abby returns to first disillusionment and loss as the key of her present problems.

For it is at Green Leaf that she has first seen clearly the chancre in the rose. The happy girls at Deree Stephens' camp are partly happy because fear and pretense shields them in the same way it shields Mrs. Stephens and her daughter,

Lisa. When Ida, one of the camp's special counsellors, must fight her epilepsy attacks alone rather than not "belong;" and when she is subsequently discovered and sent away because "nothing must happen to Greenleaf," whatever the price in Ida's hurt, Abby has begun to see this.

Still she gives naively of her love and trust to beautiful Lisa, only to be eventually branded as a thief and a Lesbian in order that Lisa may save herself.

From this betrayal Abby turns in her hurt to young Jim Brandon, the boy from home she is eventually to marry; and as they make love just out of sight of Green Leaf's important Fire Ceremony, Abby clings to this proof that she is natural, that she can give love and receive it without betrayal on either side.

But what can undo the loss of first splendor? Who can call back now the wild doe Abby has once seen swimming at dawn in the mountain lake? The world comes in upon you and hurts you undeserved; it pours in when you least expect it and it comes by the ways you had thought secure forever. It is too strong; there is nothing you can do against it.

When the focus of the novel moves forward again in time, back again to shipboard and to Abby, now 30 years old and Mrs. Jim Brandon, the remembrance of Green Leaf has brought about a decision for Abby. She must bury that part of herself which has always demanded too much, which has been confined within herself and yet loving that confinement. She must give love and await love; but she cannot snatch it from the world even though—truly enough—the world is not to be trusted. *Remembrance Way* closes in this mood with Abby moving to "that point beyond which any direction is home."

The weakness of the novel manifests



itself only in a vague feeling that the ending is too pat and the solutions somewhat contrived, and some further wish that all of it were larger. One feels that if *Remembrance Way* is to have the rhythm and depth of sea—as it so often does—if it is to have the delicacy and color of shells, then it should also have more scope, more vastness, and a larger storm or so.

But this is unfair; for the limits are set, and within this framework Jessie Rehder has made some quiet statements about the invasions which happen to people, and she has done it in a prose which is crystal-clear and often beautiful.

Miss Rehder has done this major thing with experience: she has selected one single experience which is not exactly like any one of ours, and yet the essence she distills from this is such that all women, reading it, are likely to whisper, "I remember . . . I remember. . . ."

—Doris Betts

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Manly Wade Wellman, *Rebel Boast*.  
New York: Henry Holt, 1956

Historians, writers, and civil officials all over the nation are making preparations for the celebration in 1961 of the centennial of the most fascinating epoch in American history. Manly Wade Wellman's early contribution should help make the celebration in North Carolina and the South a moving tribute to brave men fighting for an ideal.

*Rebel Boast* is the authentic story of five such young men who left their homes near Enfield, North Carolina, to join what appeared to be a short, exciting, glorious crusade against those who attacked the South's right to establish its own way of life. The *Boast*, "First at Bethel—Last at Appomattox," could be made in later years by only two of the five; the other three, left on various fields of battle, were a part of the great price paid to preserve the Union. Of the surviving two and their comrades, Mr. Wellman says, "The very few who, at the last, could look back to the first,

had bought their right to boast of it with the dearest currency, their wounds and their broken dreams."

The five chief characters, far from constituting a cross-section of the Confederate armies, represented "the best blood of the Enfield community." Related by blood and marriage, the men came to regard the war as partly a family affair. Fighting their first battle, Big Bethel on the Virginia Peninsula, as members of the First Carolina Volunteer Regiment, the five kinsmen were later to experience most of the war as veterans of Company D, 43rd North Carolina. George Whitaker Mills, the youngest and tallest of them all, was a gaunt, reserved youth of eighteen, the son of a Methodist minister. Although he faced his military duties with quiet resolution, George possessed a frank sense of humor. He could regale the folks back home with the stories invented by his slave servant—"Wash," to justify periodic returns to see his mulatto consort on the plantation. "Smiling Billy" Beavins, the most likable and carefree of the five, was George Wills' handsome, dashing cousin, for whose attention young ladies vied wherever he went. The third member of the group, John Simmons Whitaker, was at thirty-one "Old Man Sim," much like a Dutch uncle to his nephew George, but his quiet courage often strengthened the will of those around him. Johnny Beavins, "Smiling Billy's" younger brother, seemed destined at first to remain the shadowy side-kick of his more flamboyant brother, but the war proved him to be a courageous and resourceful fighter. The last of the five, Cary Whitaker, was "Old Man Sim's" younger brother and George's favorite uncle. Not yet thirty, Cary had attended the state university at Chapel Hill, taught school, read law, and served as attorney for the county of Halifax. Although Cary, like other members of the family, was a faithful Methodist, he had learned to appreciate an occasional nip of whiskey and had become a discerning judge of the fairer sex. Such were the men

who left lightheartedly for the war. Their fate is foreseen by the author. "Ambushed in the future lay exhausting marches, sickness of body and heart and soul; the unexampled brightness of arterial blood fountaining the face or chest of a beloved comrade; the ear-bursting thunder of massed artillery, the pebble-gourd rattle of musketry volleys, the flap of tattered flags, the stubborn, close-drawn, enemy ranks opposite, the howling rush of the charge, the murderous ecstasy of triumph, the pallid dismay of defeat. For some of them these experiences would be crowned by the supreme adventure of violent death."

Scene after vivid scene mark the progress of the new soldiers: the crowded, bustling depot in the hamlet of Goldsboro; Camp Ellis in Raleigh, the fairground converted into a training camp; new trenches in old Yorktown, dug by slaves and soldiers together; a hymn-singing before the opening battle led by General D. H. Hill; and the quiet death of a North Carolina boy, the first confederate soldier killed in action. Members of the Enfield Blues saw one of their new recruits going berserk and shooting two of his comrades, shared apple brandy from home with their tent-mates for their "mity bad colds," grieved openly for the three who died of measles in the first encampment, and built crude log huts for winter quarters on the peninsula below Richmond. At Camp Tadpole near Kinston, where they were compelled to sleep in the open on marshy ground, it frequently rained so hard that no one felt the need to wash his face in the mornings. Together they witnessed their quick change from cheering boys to old men, "unshorn, wolfish-eyed, tattered." Later, after marching through a Pennsylvania village in hostile Union territory, one of them wrote in his diary, "I am willing to swear that no prayers will be offered in this town for us poor ragged rebels." At nightfall on the first day at Gettysburg they fell exhausted and slept soundly between the bodies of the dead,

but on the grim morrow they pulled off their slouch hats when General Lee, head uncovered, rode slowly by. When Federal troops swarmed over the breastworks toward them like ants, grape, shell, and shrapnel felled their friends and brothers on Gettysburg's bloody fields. After the defeat, wagons of wounded splashed through the mud made by fresh graves.

Rest and food led the company slowly to recovery in the fall of 1863, and one of its members performed a welcome service by devising this recipe for the itch: "Take one wine glass of fresh unslacked lime, two of flour of sulphur, and ten of water. . . ."

As the war drew to a close, the superior weight of the Union forces made each battle more costly than the last. "Smiling Billy" Beavins, his last carefree flirtation behind him, died in a hot, quiet hospital ward in Virginia. Young men far removed from their plantation homes in North Carolina were glad to rest in the wet mud caves surrounding Petersburg. At Appomattox they stood dazed in mute disbelief when Lee and the South finally failed. For those who survived, the walk back to Enfield was the disillusioning close of their hopeless crusade.

In his reconstruction of the lives of the Enfield Blues, one of the author's chief aims was readability, and he has accomplished this goal admirably, employing the consummate skill of a writer long accustomed to constructing robust fiction. Mr. Wellman began his study of these men in the ranks at the suggestion of Bell Irvin Wiley, the noted chronicler of the common soldier of both Confederate and Union armies. By his commendable research the author has attained a wide knowledge and rare understanding of the Civil War period. Forty-five pages of notes placed at the end of the volume do not impede the fast-moving narrative. An annotated bibliography and a detailed index make the book a valuable reference to eyewitness accounts of battles and scenes of the South's foredoomed fight for independence.

Diffie W. Standard

Lucy Daniels, *Caleb, My Son*. Philadelphia and New York: J. P. Lippincott Company, 1956.

"The time was the time of the first-ripe grapes." For the American Negroes that season has been a long time in coming. They had been led out of slavery nearly a century ago but were to suffer many years in the wilderness before reaching the promised land. In May of 1954 hope of that land was rekindled and the ancient injunction of Moses—" . . . be ye of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land"—assumed a new urgency.

The Old Testament tells the story of the warrior, stoned by his own people because he dared to lead them into Canaan; elsewhere, the death of David's rebellious son evokes one of the world's famous laments. Retold through the ages, the lives of Caleb and Absalom have never ceased to transmit universal significance. Now in 1956 Lucy Daniels has skillfully and movingly

fused the two ancient myths in telling the story of Caleb Blake who dares to taste the fruit of equality and urge his people to capture the promised land.

It is this universality in *Caleb, My Son* that saves Miss Daniels' book from that class of propagandistic literature which our "race problem" produces in all too copious quantities. By the same virtue, *Caleb, My Son* is a far more meaningful comment on the specific problems of Negro-white relations than the avowedly "segregation" novel.

The tragic situation of the novel develops out of a son's defiance of the laws of his universe and his father's obligation to uphold them. To Asa Blake, father of a secure and respected Negro family, his primary duty is to protect that security and respect by which alone the family can survive. A great deal can be tolerated, but as Asa puts it, " . . . y' gotta draw a line when y' staht ruinin' the chances of yo' whole fam'ly." And this is precisely what Caleb, Asa's eldest son,

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inevitably does in flouting the white man's taboos by preaching equality and dating a white girl. In the end, the situation is reduced to its fundamental elements and Caleb is offered up, with bitter agony, as a human sacrifice to the safety of the basic social unit, the family.

It is Caleb's rebellion against the values and traditions of his family that makes his death inevitable. The struggle between Asa and Caleb is as old as history: a contest between those who dare to be free, whatever the odds, and those who cling to the safety of the status quo. The Biblical Caleb, urging his people to march into Canaan, met only rebuke and fear: "And wherefore doth the Lord bring us unto this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones shall be a prey: were it not better for us to return into Egypt?" Caleb Blake, impelled by his nature and encouraged by the Supreme Court's "law", meets a similar response from his father: "Jes min' you stay outa trouble. These is white folks' laws; white folks, they don' want colahed folks playin' wid deir laws."

The struggle for survival is of nature's doing; the laws of that survival, however, are determined by men; by white men in the world of the Blakes. Thus there is interposed between the Negro and nature an influence which twists and confuses nature's fundamental requirements. It is the sensitive development of this "interposition" and a skilful handling of the dual nature of the Negro's universe that is Miss Daniels' unusual contribution.

Miss Daniels tells her story in very brief compass; it can, and should be read at a single sitting. The structure is tight; the symbolism pervasive and reverberating, if sometimes too obvious. The carefully balanced characters are remarkably vivid, but this reviewer does not feel the two main characters have been sufficiently developed. We are told that although they act, they do not entirely understand the forces moving them. One strongly feels that the book would make an excellent play

in which the characters could reveal themselves even more fully. Despite this debatable shortcoming, the agelessness of the theme developed in so timely a context results in a remarkably powerful piece of writing.

—Paul M. Gaston

*The Greenhouse in the Garden.* Charles Edward Eaton. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1956.

*Something the West Will Remember.* H. A. Sieber. Chapel Hill: Old Well Publishers, 1956.

These two recent volumes of poetry come naturally to the attention of the *Carolina Quarterly* and its readers. Both poets are well known to the University community at Chapel Hill: Mr. Eaton through his earlier position on the faculty of the Department of English and Mr. Sieber by his current program of study in the School of Law. Conscientious readers of local poets will also remember both writers' previously published works. Mr. Eaton's *The Bright Plain* appeared in 1942, and his *Shadow of the Swimmer*, which won the Ridgely Torrence Memorial Award, introduced his poetry to a larger number of readers in 1951. Hal Sieber's *In Th's The Marian Year* gained considerable general attention and the approval of many Carolina critics including Paul Green, Richard Walser and Sam Ragan at the time of its publication in 1955.

Initial anticipation of pleasure and pride is not, we believe, disappointed by a first glance at either *The Greenhouse in the Garden* or *Something the West Will Remember*. No "Roses are red/Violets are Blue" inanity is there to irk us, nor are we led to fear that the initial complexity especially of Mr. Sieber's work will obviously not be worth that effort any intelligent reader is prepared to give poetry which abandons familiar form and content if that reader at all trusts the integrity of the poet to make his effort worthwhile.

Even a cursory first view through the four sections of *The Greenhouse in*

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*the Garden* reveals a trustworthy order and system in Mr. Eaton's verse. As we read we begin to be taught as if by plan a special language: a language of flowers and dark gardens, of evening spells and suggested scents, of Southern feminine presence. It is a somewhat antique and restricted language and one our mid-century taste is not easily persuaded to grant a fair hearing. But if we listen carefully, we begin to learn that Mr. Eaton has purposes for this language far beyond the communication of tired notions to the effect that flowers are beautiful and love's a thing of sweetness and sorrow. It soon becomes clear that Mr. Eaton has again displayed his ability to use much of the language of "pretty poetry" for far sturdier purposes, and this is a saving grace in the eyes of readers who have long ago wearied of cut-flower decorative posey.

Mr. Eaton takes up something of a dare, one senses, in using such titles as "Among the Ruins," "Willow Rose," "A Lady of Lilies," and "The Garden Party." (If the nature of the dare is not clear, then try to find similar titles among the nervous imitators of leading contemporary "modern" poets!) He then walks his self-chosen tightrope of taste with a further bit of daring. He does not choose to mock as many current writers would feel obligated to do if they were assigned his surface subject matter: the world of gardens, ladies, wine, and wisteria. Instead he moves with that same sensuous grace evident in many of his earlier poems in *The Shadow of the Swimmer*—and well exemplified by that title itself—to moods tenderer than satire or mockery but not cloying as 'tender' poetry can easily be. In the following lines from "Tiger Lilies," this remarkable ability to move with lean good taste and strength through themes and terms few recent poets with the exception of Mr. Eaton can handle without getting their hands sticky is particularly evident.

So you who let the summer give  
you images

Dream the hunter and the hunted,  
never sleeping in defeat.

And thrust your hand against the  
flesh of flowers, fevered with a  
noonday heat

As though memory, fantasy, might  
somewhere yield their lost pur-  
suits and treacheries.

In quite another way Hal Sieber remains within the good graces of those local readers who are inclined from the beginning to be sympathetic to his work. He chooses to write in a markedly "modern" style, but a quick first turn through his fourteen-part poem serves to convince the careful reader that there is more there than modernity for its own sake or for the sake of shocking whoever might still be shocked by it.

As one commences *Something the West Will Remember*, one may ask if in Part I: "The westmemory of our finedrawn gambit" must necessarily come "wingfully" or be "pudding-proved for you and you," but as one reads on to Part II and discovers:

And black flapping hawks  
give each other loud glances  
and the hounds unquote each other  
this long long long long fore-  
morning

one realizes that Mr. Sieber is getting at the stuff of real poetry with the help or in spite of—if you will—his frequent Cummings to and Poundings at the door of his readers' sensitivities.

There is an order in the sequence of themes in the fourteen parts of Mr. Sieber's poem and an aesthetic appropriateness to that order. These aspects of the poem reflect care and an ear for unity not always evident within the imagery of the individual parts of the poem

Of most promising significance in Mr. Sieber's work to date is his catholic range of sympathies. He is not content to echo only the pessimism and denial of values so popular in much of contemporary collegiate verse but will speak as Richard Walser has pointed out as honestly of hope or of forgotten devotion suddenly become important:

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the atoms split at the doom's time  
and at precisely seven moments till  
a bit of praying and beadtelling  
was done (as a matter of routine)  
at a monastery in Kentucky.

Mr. Sieber confirms the sincerity of this  
range of perceptive sympathy by doing  
more than naming varied and some-  
times unpopular subject matter. He  
takes these greatly varied points of view  
earnestly enough to say them rather  
well and tellingly:

The saint and the poet  
from their brown mound sour-  
leaved American graves  
talked without proof about the  
autopsies in question  
and decided that the quotidian  
reminders  
of our zooid heritage  
called for, could use a new code  
from this old litany:

These then are first impressions that  
might be gained by local readers in-  
clined to look hopefully for all that is  
good in their neighbor's or former  
neighbor's work. We must ask how-  
ever, how Mr. Eaton's and Mr. Sieber's  
latest poetry stands in the light of less  
parochial standards.

Briefly put, Mr. Eaton's *The Green-  
house in the Garden* can be most favor-  
ably considered if it is seen as a *tour de  
force*, a successful taking up of a poetic  
dare. The poet has used dangerous  
language in largely traditional patterns  
and has been for the most part success-  
ful in his stunt. He has frequently  
reached passages of genuine depth and  
poignancy of which he and his regional  
supporters need never be ashamed.

So in a trembling moment, as long  
as would afford  
The mind to ponder how the heart  
can waste,  
He held the flower, imperial and  
chaste,  
And knew where in dominion she  
still would have him lord.

The disadvantage of the *tour de force*  
is, of course, its loss of vitality in repe-  
tition. We can look then with great



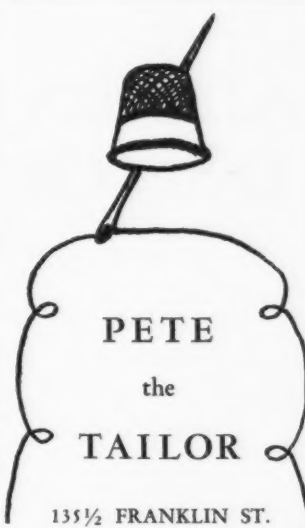
interest to whatever new course Mr. Eaton takes in future poems assured that his obvious talents will grow in appeal as his subject matter broadens.

Seen from higher towers, Mr. Sieber's poem commends itself in promise more than presence. The poet's genuine ability to develop a wide variety of personalized points of view, *personae*, if you prefer, with honesty and sensitivity is well presented in *Something the West Will Remember*. This seems to be a salient ability, and we could hope to see more of it in future work. Several of the parts of the poem contain skillfully handled images that go far toward making up for those lapses of taste or losses of poetic control that any young poet must risk if he learns his art by practicing it. Indeed it would seem to us that none of those weaknesses careful readers may find in Mr. Sieber's work to date reflect any more than the quite normal disorders inherent in any real growth. This is not to say that they are not still weaknesses. It is to claim that they are not yet deadly sins. We may hope that Mr. Sieber will entrust his readers again soon with another volume and trust his own good ideas to stand up for themselves free from any disconcerting word-mortaring.

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## THE CAROLINA QUARTERLY

Announces Its

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Continuing its tradition of rewarding and encouraging literary excellence, THE CAROLINA QUARTERLY offers two awards, of fifty and twenty-five dollars, for the two best stories submitted to the current contest.

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Judges for the contest will be the editors and Fiction Board of the magazine. Decisions will be final. Stories should be mailed unsigned, with name and address of the author attached separately, and accompanied by a stamped self-addressed envelope. Judges reserve right to withhold the awards in the event there are no stories of sufficient merit.

Deadline for the contest is midnight Monday, April 1, 1957. No stories postmarked after that date will be considered.

Address all manuscripts to: CONTEST EDITOR, THE CAROLINA QUARTERLY, Box 1117, Chapel Hill, N. C.

*The Carolina Quarterly wishes to thank Archibald MacLeish; his publishers, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston; and the University of North Carolina Communication Center, for permission to record in print what they recorded in sound, on the "Listen America" radio series at Chapel Hill.*

## The Poet and America

*A discussion of his development as a poet*

I am going to read some poems about America—what I think America is and what from time to time in the past I have thought it was.

When a man follows this train of mind his life is indeed, and in the most literal sense, an open book. He is constantly putting himself on paper and what he puts on paper is never twice the same because he is never twice the same. The changes of mind which will disappear in the length of life of another man, as eddies disappear in a long river, do not disappear for him. They are there in print; only those poets who are able to maintain what it is now fashionable to call a certain "distance" from their poems escape the exposure, the "distance" for example of irony, "safety in derision" as Yeats called it.

The rest of us must confess, having no choice but to confess, that we have seen the world in different ways from year to year for, like everyone else, we are constantly engaged in trying to see it better. Each poem is a new beginning but no poem cancels what went before. I am over sixty but I am still trying to see, trying to see in poems what America really is. It has been different things to me over what I suppose I must call a long lifetime, though it seems anything but long to me now.

In the beginning America was land, land and weather. I was born in Illinois under slow-growing oaks with the lake, Lake Michigan, under the bluff to the east and a great swamp to the west and beyond that the prairie. It seemed to me, though I had seen no other, a new land, perhaps because my father was a Scot by birth, perhaps because my mother (though she belonged to a family which had been American from the first beginnings of the country) was a New Englander, a Connecticut woman, to whom the West was always a little strange—even so eastern a west as Illinois. In any case, whatever the reason, America was land to me and the land was new—to be learned about. This is an attempt to learn. This is a poem called "Cook County"—a country figured in its winds.

### COOK COUNTY

The northeast wind was the wind off the lake  
Blowing the oak-leaves pale side out like  
Aspen: blowing the sound of the surf far  
Inland over the fences: blowing for  
Miles over smell of the earth the lake smell in.

The southwest wind was thunder in afternoon.  
You saw the wind first in the trumpet vine  
And the green went white with the sky and the weather-vane  
Whirled on the barn and the doors slammed altogether.  
After the rain in the grass we used to gather  
Wind-fallen cold white apples.

The west  
Wind was the August wind, the wind over waste  
Valleys over the waterless plains where still  
Were skulls of the buffalo, where in the sand stale  
Dung lay of wild cattle. The west wind blew  
Day after day as the winds on the plains blow  
Burning the grass, turning the leaves brown, filling  
Noon with the bronze of cicadas, far out falling  
Dark on the colorless water, the lake where not  
Waves were nor movement.

The north wind was at night  
When no leaves and the husk on the oak stirs  
Only nor birds then. The north wind was stars  
Over the whole sky and snow in the ways  
And snow on the sand where in summer the water was . . .

But sooner or later any American who thinks about his country very much, thinks of it in other terms than those of earth and sun and wind and weather. He thinks of it as a nation, which means that he thinks of it not as the extension of himself in nature but as something different from himself, other than himself; not so much as a physical reality as an idea, an idea, moreover, which exists in other minds than his and may exist there in terms he cannot accept. I began to think of America in this way in France, during what we are coming to call The First War, and I thought of it in this way even more vividly when I went up into Belgium afterward to find my brother's grave. He had been an aviator, one of the first naval aviators, who miraculously lasted almost a year on the front, flying Camel fighters and who had been shot down a few days before the armistice—his body lying in flooded ground undiscovered for months after. As you will see there are two Americas in this poem: That of the ambassador, and that of my brother.

#### MEMORIAL RAIN

*for Kenneth MacLeish, 1894-1918*

AMBASSADOR PUSER the ambassador  
Reminds himself in French, felicitous tongue,  
What these (young men no longer) lie here for  
In rows that once, and somewhere else, were young—

All night in Brussels the wind had tugged at my door:  
I had heard the wind at my door and the trees strung  
Taut, and to me who had never been before



In that country it was a strange wind blowing  
Steadily, stiffening the walls, the floor,  
The roof of my room. I had not slept for knowing  
He too, dead, was a stranger in that land  
And felt beneath the earth in the wind's flowing  
A tightening of roots and would not understand,  
Remembering lake winds in Illinois,  
That strange wind. I had felt his bones in the sand  
Listening.

—Reflects that these enjoy  
Their country's gratitude, that deep repose,  
That peace no pain can break, no hurt destroy,  
That rest, that sleep—

At Ghent the wind rose.  
There was a smell of rain and a heavy drag  
Of wind in the hedges but not as the wind blows  
Over fresh water when the waves lag  
Foaming and the willows huddle and it will rain:  
I felt him waiting.

—Indicates the flag  
Which (may he say) enisles in Flander's plain  
This little field these happy, happy dead  
Have made America—

In the ripe grain  
The wind coiled glistening, darted, fled,  
Dragging its heavy body: at Waereghem  
The wind coiled in the grass above his head:  
Waiting—listening—

—Dedicates to them  
This earth their bones have hallowed, this last gift  
A grateful country—

Under the dry grass stem  
The words are blurred, are thickened, the words sift  
Confused by the rasp of the wind, by the thin grating  
Of ants under the grass, the minute shift  
And tumble of dusty sand separating  
From dusty sand. The roots of the grass-strain,  
Tighten, the earth is rigid, waits—he is waiting—

And suddenly, and all at once, the rain!

The living scatter, they run into houses, the wind  
Is trampled under the rain, shakes free, is again  
Trampled. The rain gathers, running in thinned  
Spurts of water that ravel in the dry sand

Seeping in the sand under the grass roots, seeping  
Between cracked boards to the bones of a clenched hand:  
The earth relaxes, loosens; he is sleeping,  
He rests, he is quiet, he sleeps in a strange land.

There were still two Americas for me when the war was over and the twenties and thirties followed. I did a series of poems called "Frescoes for Mr. Rockefeller's City", written in a rage at the empire builders who had exploited the continent, and the poets who had deserted it, and the Communists who talked nonsense about it:

... The New York Daily Worker goes a'blowing over Arkansas  
The New York Daily Worker goes a'blowing over Arkansas  
The grasses let it go along the Ozarks over Arkansas.

In those frescoes there are two poems which include these two images. The first, "Empire Builders," contrasts them. The second, "Landscape as a Nude," tries to recover the old innocence of eye which saw the continent.

#### EMPIRE BUILDERS

*The Museum Attendant:*

This is *The Making of America in Five Panels*:

This is Mister Harriman making America:  
Mister-Harriman-is-buying-the-Union-Pacific-at-Seventy:  
The Sante Fe is shining on his hair:

This is Commodore Vanderbilt making America:  
Mister-Vanderbilt-is-eliminating-the-short-interest-in-Hudson:  
Observe the carving on the rocking chair:

This is J. P. Morgan making America:  
(The Tennessee Coal is behind to the left of the Steel Company:)  
Those in mauve are braces he is wearing:

This is Mister Mellon making America:  
Mister-Mellon-is-represented-as-a-symbolic-figure-in-aluminum-  
Strewing-bank-stocks-on-a-burnished-stair:

This is the Bruce is the Barton making America:  
Mister-Barton-is-selling-us-Doctor's-Deliciousest-Dentifrice:  
This is he in beige with the canary:

You have just beheld the Makers making America:  
This is *The Making of America in Five Panels*:  
America lies to the west-southwest of the Switch-Tower:  
There is nothing to see of America but land:

You have just beheld the Makers making America:

They screwed her scrawny and gaunt with their seven-year panics:  
They bought her back on their mortgages old-whore-cheap:  
They fattened their bonds at her breasts till the thin blood  
ran from them:

Men have forgotten how full clear and deep  
The Yellowstone moved on the gravel and grass grew  
When the land lay waiting for her westward people!

And this is the other side of the coin.

#### LANDSCAPE AS A NUDE

She lies on her left side her flank golden:  
Her hair is burned black with the strong sun.  
The scent of her hair is of rain in the dust on her shoulders:  
She has brown breasts and the mouth of no other country.

Ah she is beautiful here in the sun where she lies:  
She is not like the soft girls naked in vineyards  
Nor the soft naked girls of the English islands  
Where the rain comes in with the surf on an east wind:

Here is the west wind and the sunlight: the west  
Wind is the long clean wind of the continents—  
The wind turning with earth, the wind descending  
Steadily out of the evening and following on.

The wind here where she lies is west: the trees  
Oak ironwood cottonwood hickory: standing in  
Great groves they roll on the wind as the sea would.  
The grasses of Iowa Illinois Indiana

Run with the plunge of the wind as a wave tumbling.

Under her knees there is no green lawn of the Florentines:  
Under her dusty knees is the corn stubble:  
Her belly is flecked with the flickering light of the corn. . . .

But at the same time there was something else, too, something more than these two Americas, something which has haunted better and wiser men than I: The question of the underlying definition of that word. What was America, after all, if it was not merely boy and nature, man and nature? What was the idea which called itself America, and which Ambassador Puser and the patrioteers had so betrayed? I struggled with that in a poem called "American Letter"—and failed. This was a poem written at the beginning of the thirties when I had come back from six years of France, and when the contrast between my own country and the older, more homogeneous, more centered life of Europe, was sharp in my mind. This passage will show you what I was trying to do, and how short I fell:

#### AMERICAN LETTER

It is a strange thing—to be an American.  
Neither an old house it is with the air  
Tasting of hung herbs and the sun returning  
Year after year to the same door and the churn  
Making the same sound in the cool of the kitchen  
Mother to son's wife, and the place to sit  
Marked in the dusk by the worn stone at the wellhead—  
That—nor the eyes like each other's eyes and the skull  
Shaped to the same fault and the hands' sameness.

Neither a place it is nor a blood name.  
 America is West and the wind blowing.  
 America is a great word and the snow,  
 A way, a white bird, the rain falling,  
 A shining thing in the mind and the gull's call.  
 America is neither a land nor a people,  
 A word's shape it is, a wind's sweep—  
 America is alone: many together,  
 Many of one mouth, of one breath,  
 Dressed as one—and none brothers among them:  
 Only the taught speech and the aped tongue.  
 America is alone and the gulls calling.

None of those images, you see, discover what I needed to discover. "America is West and the wind blowing," but that is not all it is. The one thing that was certain in that poem was the assertion that it is here that we must make our peace and find our place, for it is this land we love. But then, what is it? What is this idea that pulls at us all and that takes the name of America? This promise: To whom is the promise offered? And of what? I put these questions to myself when the Nazis began to overrun the earth in the late thirties, and the idea of America began to show more brilliantly against the gathering dark. The poem was called, "America was Promises." Here again the poem is far too long to include it all. I can give the question I put, perhaps best.

#### AMERICA WAS PROMISES

Who is the voyager in these leaves?  
 Who is the traveler in this journey  
 Deciphers the revolving night: receives  
 The signal from the light returning?

America was promises to whom?

East were the  
 Dead kings and the remembered sepulchres:  
 West was the grass.

The groves of the oaks were at evening.  
 Eastward are the nights where we have slept.

And we move on: we move down:  
 With the first light we push forward:  
 We descend from the past as a wandering people from  
 mountains.  
 We cross into the day to be discovered.  
 The dead are left where they fall—at dark  
 At night late under the coverlets.  
 We mark the place with the shape of our teeth on our fingers.  
 The room is left as it was: the love  
 Who is the traveler in these leaves these  
 Annual waters and beside the doors

Jonquils: then the rose: the eaves  
 Heaping the thunder up: the mornings  
 Opening on like great valleys  
 Never till now approached: the familiar trees  
 Far off: distand with the future:  
 The hollyhocks beyond the afternoons:  
 The butterflies over the ripening fruit on the balconies:  
 And all beautiful  
 All before us . . .

The answers I give are Jefferson's answer, Adam's answer, Tom Paine's answer, and they add up to no answer, no answer to me. Those years of the Second War, though, weren't years in which a man could think about these things; not, at least, in Washington where I spent them. But history has a way of providing answers of its own, and ideas are more often defined by their opposites than by their shadows. As the war was fought and won, and the decade which followed began its unhappy course, certain things that had been dark were dark no longer. One learned, at least, what America was not. It was not what the frightened thought it was—those who were so terrified of the Russians that they thought America was nothing but a wall to keep them out. I felt sure enough of that in 1947 to write a poem I called "Brave New World."

#### BRAVE NEW WORLD

But you, Thomas Jefferson,  
 You could not lie so still,  
 You could not bear the weight of stone  
 On the quiet hill,

You could not keep your green grown peace  
 Nor hold your folded hand  
 If you could see your new world now,  
 Your new sweet land.

There was a time, Tom Jefferson,  
 When freedom made free men.  
 The new found earth and the new freed mind  
 Were brothers then.

There was a time when tyrants feared  
 The new world of the free.  
 Now freedom is afraid and shrieks  
 At tyranny.

Words have not changed their sense so soon  
 Nor tyranny grown new.  
 The truths you held, Tom Jefferson,  
 Will still hold true.

\* \* \* \*

Your countrymen who could have hurled

You could not hold your angry tongue  
If you could see how bold  
The old stale bitter world plays new—  
And the new world old.

12

On what tide  
Rising to what fresh wind, what cries  
Of morning seagulls, shall the ship move;  
Stir in her stench of ooze and lift  
And on the cold sea, on the cleansing water,  
Lean to her course?

*Where are the fountains?*

But these years were, after all, only the shadows, passing shadows. What America is is part what America is not. And what America is not is only a part of the definition I have been looking for all my life—the definition of the American idea, the idea of the republic. I suppose I shall go on looking for it as long as I live and write. But of one thing I am now sure; that I know in which direction it will be found. Not in the continent itself, the earth (though the continent is part of it); not in the nation (though the nation too is part); not even in the ideal, the abstraction, but in men's lives—in the lives of those Americans who have lived the American tradition and so recreated it. For the idea of America is an idea of human integrity set in a rich land, with the greatest of all man's dreams to live by—the dream of a whole and generous freedom. In a poem called "Actfive," in a passage in that poem, I attempted to put down the death of a president of the republic who had lived in that tradition, and died in it. He would have been the last to say that the answer was there in his life. But it is in this direction, in the lives and deaths of a man here and a man there, a woman, who in Yeats' great phrase about Dean Swift, served human liberty. It is here, in this direction, in the lives lived for human liberty, that the answer will be found. My poem, the fragment of it that I want to close with, is this:

#### ACTFIVE

The responsible man, death's hand upon his shoulder,  
Knowing well the liars may prevail  
And calumny bring all his days to nothing;  
Knowing truth has often been betrayed  
By time that keeps it, as the crock taints water;  
Knowing nothing suffered or endured  
Will change by one word what the worst will say,  
What those who listen to the worst believe—  
The responsible man: teeth bad: sleep  
Difficult: tired tired tired to the heart:  
Carries the day to the next day to the next:  
Does what must be done: dies in his chair  
Fagged out, worn down, sick  
With the weight of his own bones, the task finished,  
The war won, the victory assured,  
The glory left behind him for the others.  
(And the wheels roll up through the night in the sweet land  
In the cool air in the spring between the lanterns.)

## Coarse Angel

*"... skull crushed" ... "New School Professor" ... "they're questioning his roommate" ... "a girl student" ... Words in flak down Vic's bar ... "too many murders" ... "newspapers call it The Village if it's anywhere near" ... "like the Hotel Albert murder" ... "bushed up in a hurry ..."*

*"... the one in a cold water flat" ... "closer to the Bowery than The Village" ... "the painter and his girl friend" ... "that was only a few blocks from here on Bethune" ... "used to be a Village for artists, now murderers" ... "couldn't be robbery, his wallet still on him" ... "How about the ring?" ... "removed with such violence they broke his finger ..."*

Little Mrs. Mapes, the bar's eighty-one-year-old grandmother, sprung her lorgnettes from their Florentine silver case to read the newsprint in what light glanced off shelves of glasses and bottles.

Ladybug's age cropped years off Vic's regulars, she was family to those afool of theirs. In an alcoholic looking after her, they poked their heads out of self for a breath, and they felt better about aging if they could have her fun.

Called Ladybug for her littleness, cuteness, her flying all about, and her polka dots. "They're confetti, they're carnival," she'd say. "Spanish dancers wear polka dots for flashing motion," and Ladybug could do her own flashing—girl walk, bell voice, except in bronchial season.

Her face in sand ripples, dark hair persisting, Spanish dark for combs she wore with or without a modified mantilla.

Mrs. Mapes couturiered her Fourteenth Street bargains with other era jet and fringe, and a world traveler's assortment of coral, lapis lazuli, hammerings, hand toolings.

"The Professor was pushing sixty," she said in a voice resilient as her arches, "no slow dying, at least. Lively life—lively death. No obit page for him, he's front page news."

A grandmother, but no family around her except these hard drinking psychoanalyzed buyers of her meals and the few she drank. Twice widowed, she seemed to live by the off and on support of a

EMILIE GLEN of New York City, a former editor for The New Yorker and at Macmillan's, is currently editor of Conference Trails. Her stories have appeared in Best American Short Stories—1952, New Voices, Prairie Schooner, Whetstone, The American Mercury, The Colorado Review, and other publications. She is a member of the Poetry Society of America.



step-daughter. Much as they liked Ladybug they were sure it was stay-away money, as hers could be a pepper tongue to live with, or even to bar with for overworked adrenals.

"Why do you let that Marty with his police record stay in your room?" she asked Clifford Miles. "He'd steal the gold from his grandmother's teeth."

"What break did he ever get? Had the decency to return my glasses, and he's promised to get the other things out of hock."

"Yes, if you'll hand over the money to buy them back, which he'll spend as before. He could be working with a gang. You could be murdered in your bed even by Marty with his brown melt eyes. They don't always mean to murder, they lose their heads if you catch them in the act, especially a two-time offender. I don't know how they ever made a bottle-baby like you executor of—"

"What you need is a case of lockjaw. Will you shut, or do I have to move to the end of the bar?"

With a toreador flourish to her moleskin cape, she stood down from the bar in the imperiousness of a tiny person who thinks tall, started to walk out.

"Ladybug, ladybug, don' fly away home."

She let Cliff cuddle her back from out there. "It's just that you sometimes force us to sit for our portraits." He groped off for one of his phone booth travels, leaving her in a bar lull that turned her back on self. A tightness in her chest that could mean another bronchial attack. Polka dots or no, her bones old dice.

The door kept opening to a draft. She moved down the bar from the chills of March to the fevers of the juke box.

"Turn that horror down," she told the bartender.

"Off," said a leathered little man not much taller than she, "Off, and seal the coin slot."

She would go behind the bar and work the controls herself if she hadn't tiffed too much over that Pandora's box. "I remember," she told him as he smoothed his British clipped mustache, "when you could walk into the Brevoort, the old Waldorf, or Wanamaker's restaurant, and hear dinner music coming from a real orchestra."

"And the old Lafayette. I was in the Lafayette back in 1914 when war was declared. Sailed for England next day to join my regiment."

"And what one might that be?"

"Captain in the Royal Welsh Fusileers."

One plum of the old, you could start a conversation with any fascinating person you liked . . . "A proud regiment. I visited Wales with my first husband. We stayed at a seaside resort, LLandudno, Tblandidno, I think you pronounce it."

Bert set drinks on the house before them, leaned forward with "How's about a tip on the ponies when Belmont starts."

"I never bet. My column is no scratch sheet, it has nothing to do with picking winners, centers more on the horsy set than the horses."

"My father used to breed horses in a small way," she told him, "not that he ever bet, not with his Methodist upbringing. Ours were mostly Percherons."

Father a king in their upstate town . . . mother a parasoled lady, sun in grape clusters through the tight silk when she would come out to the village square from the shady side of the street.

"Nothing more splendid than a Percheron," he was saying, "very *terre-a-terre*, but splendid."

Talk took off from Percherons to racing stables to the Dylan Thomas he knew in Wales. "I have the Dylan Thomas recordings," she said, "perhaps you'd like to come over and hear them. I only live a twist and a turn from here."

Jockey size, his skin saddle leather, he looked like a race track tout, walking along in his pitching gait as if he had metal plates in his knees. Turned up his collar, turned down his beaten brim, but with gloved elegance.

More spots before her eyes than polka dots, climbing the flight to her room.

"You mean to say you don't keep your door locked?"

"What for? No one is interested in picking off an eighty-two-year-old grandmother with no possessions left of any commercial value."

She opened the door to her pets, Nibbles lifting his white mouse head from his pencil shavings, Greenmint on his turtle rock beneath a plastic palm tree. The high ceilinged room right for her Oriental rugs, her mother's inlaid rosewood table, the fan collection, her pictures of Duse and Bernhardt. Long windows opened to a rose iron balcony like the room she and her husband had stayed in for a month of summer on a square in Copenhagen.

"A bit chilly in here. What heat there is goes off after eleven. How about a cup of real English tea, none of those American tea-bags, and toast spread with cheddar cheese in wine sauce?"

Clapped his hands . . . "Nice, really nice. I'm in a blue funk out of racing season. A charming evening like this helps."

Sitting down to their past midnight feast, she felt more than the chill of the room . . . chill at his eyes in narrowed distance as if he were watching ghost horses run, or—or the face she had wondered about, the face of murder, could it be his?

She put on the Dylan Thomas record, the one that said, *And death shall have no dominion*, and the one about never forgetting to rage at death.

Of course he had to bring up the murder, or did she? Anyway she was saying, "You can live and die unnoticed, but get yourself murdered and you've an aura of destiny, everything about you assumes importance, even the half digested food in your stomach."

"Closest I ever came was the Rothstein murder. I happened to be at the Park Central desk the night he was murdered and asked not meaning a thing, 'What do you know?' I kept out of sight for some time after that. Still see his henchmen around. We have an occasional bull session."

"What are they like? What rackets are they in now?"

"The boys are old, beat up, too tired to get going again. They sit around dreaming of the old days."

A nimbus of words from gangsters to Duse and D'Annunzio until he said at the door, "Exquisite interlude. Never missed the track. I'll send you a fan from Mexico to add to your collection" . . . held her hand too tight for brittle bones . . . those hands at the throat could . . . lizarding thoughts from the evening's talk of murder.

"I shouldn't have kept you up so late just because I feel lost between races." His grip softened, he patted her hand *Goodnight*.

His caution to lock her door had her pressing the catch. Psychopaths and thieves did exist, but what did she have that anybody would want in person or possession? Sometimes a criminal so angered at finding nothing, he killed you for spite. She must stop inviting strangers, but that was how she kept this from being a lonely room, that and her pets and keepsakes.

In nightmare and waking she got through to her best hours. The city didn't sequin until cocktail time. She had nursed too many of the sick, slow dying, in the hard morning light, mother, sister, her second husband through the paralyzed years.

Her polka dot scarf flying the wind, she started out for Vic's just as it was getting nicely dark, excited as when her mother and father used to let her stay up late for the band concert in the village square.

Fay and her new bed partner invited her into a booth for some juicy rare prime ribs. You never knew whether Fay would pour a glass of beer over your head for turning the juke box down, or keep you in cash until your check came; had been thrown out of every bar in the neighborhood for her scenes, foul language, but it was Fay who always looked in on her to see if she were all right, knew her dread of being taken with a stroke or any long last sickness, knew that she lay awake in the night asking which disease would it be? Cancer? Cold sweat at the thought. A stroke? Heart attack?

She could almost take an overdose of sleeping pills against these dreads if suicide weren't a greater dread. In no hurry to leave this

world for fear of waking to the next. Enough Methodist conscience to worry about those few moments with the tourist guide in Ragusa.

One look at the markings on her turtle, the wondrous design of the under shell like God's seal, gave her too much respect for the life He had created ever to destroy her own. Besides, she was having too much fun. All you needed to fire interest was to be a lively eighty-two . . . way more attention than she had as a girl.

Cliff's Marty was at the bar, opened his mouth wide and pointed to his back teeth . . . "Dental troubles—I need gold fillings" . . . letting her know that Cliff had passed along her remark about stealing the gold from his grandmother's teeth.

That lonesome young soldier down the bar was starting to drink too much . . . tempted to invite him up to her room for strong black coffee. The shy smiling could be your worst killer. A hitch hiking young soldier had murdered the ones who had given him a lift. Murder could wear the face of innocence.

She invited no one up to her room until an April sweet evening when a couple of students decided they wanted her to adopt them. "You should see my autographed picture of Nijinski" . . . out with it to the young dancer . . . two of them ought to be safe enough . . . "and I've several Caruso records," she told the music student, "and a quaint old instrument you might like to try—a recorder. Many a merry tune my father piped on it."

The young musician brought the recorder to life with Purcell, Jigs and Rondos that the dancer took in mid air, *entrechat* he called one of the steps, *between the cats*, as Nibbles pointed his white head up out of the pencil shavings. Delight—even though the boys must have thought they were adopting a richer grandmother until they saw her room.

From their back and forth, their excluding of her even while they centered her, she was not too village innocent to have an idea of what they were to each other, but that was their own business except that, well, such people could be vicious, hated women, perhaps not a grandmother, perhaps precisely a grandmother. Batlike thoughts hanging from the caves of mind, take a broom to them.

As she knelt to roll another Oriental rug from the dancer's dizzying turns, he went into such a leap above her head that she startled to a shriek, subsiding it to admiring cries. The musician came up from behind, grasped her arms . . . couldn't scream, couldn't—only to help her to her feet, roll the rug himself.

City of violence, age of violence, always on the edge of catastrophe, horns a wolf pack through the streets, siren hell, horror headlines, murder a daily routine.

In locking her door when they left she locked in her own alarm. Thieves looted for little, these days. With the record player spinning

*The Firebird* to a climax, too many unexplained sounds lurked in its folds. She turned it off, listened . . . bathtub faucet dripping chunky drops, stubborn window sash, motor starting up. She began to undress. Mama had always insisted on faultless underclothes in case of an accident. What would she think of a torn slip washed grey?

She fed Nibbles, cuddled the minute fur ball, gave Greenmint his evening promenade along the table, turned out the lamp, raced the shadows to her bed, lay listening, had to get up to assure herself that the iron balcony was too high for climbing, watched a couple on the steps across the way, arms about each other, her head on his shoulder, watched until it was she on the brownstone steps underneath the wisteria, with no thought of death or dying only of parting from her love.

In off and on sleep she got through to bar time. Hardly anyone there she knew tonight except the merchant seaman, not that she knew him, but he had made sense when he said, "Why is everyone so aghast when the murderer looks decent enough? What do you expect? Scar face? Frankenstein? He could help you across the street, give you a loan, put a coin in a beggar's cup, save the life of a child."

A merchant seaman who looked merchant seaman, far seeing grey eyes, sea salt tan, bull necked, stubby featured. A seaman painter, Cliff said. His tanker had crashed into another ship in a fog, and he was out of a job, rumor being that he was drunk on watch.

"Your paintings have been in merchant marine exhibits, I hear," she said to him. "China painting is about all I've ever done. Oh, and tinsel painting. They're collector's items, you know. A pattern is traced on window glass. Then you apply transparent oil colors, and back the glass with crinkled silver paper for highlights. I have some paints and brushes you might like if you want to see me home."

Clifford came along, and they had a painting session into morning.

The seaman returned next night to finish his sketch of Nibbles and Greenmint. He was just enough overboard so that she had to refuse him the bourbon she kept for special guests, but she hadn't figured on his carrying his own pint. His hand along her leg, the idea . . . a rape murder at her age, young ones wondering what has grandma got.

Fay was right, she should have married Mr. Moffatt, the fine old school gentleman she had discouraged, but it could mean turning nurse again to the slow dying.

"With a pint totter on watch," the Methodist in her had to say, "no wonder your tanker crashed in the fog."

Still as her mouse at his red necked rage . . . "Nobody says that to me—nobody" . . . fist doubled, raised.

He dropped his arm back to his side, went lurching down the stairs.

She felt old and sick among the paints . . . left the bed lamp on for awhile, lay in a chill on this humid night.

Sick for several days . . . a virus, her doctor said. Fay came to look after her, a scrappy Fay, her blood so full of alcohol she took almost every remark as an insult.

By the time she could manage to get herself dressed and over to Vic's again, Clifford was off on a vacation from a vacation, leaving Marty with little to do but try to palm change from the bar.

One night when they were about the only regulars, she could see what Cliff meant about Marty getting under your skin, why his belated attempts at PAL to this dead-end kid. His brown dark eyes in a sad *Aren't you going to speak?* After all, Cliff did spill his money around, valued nothing, and Marty did return his glasses and his overcoat, but of course he was too weak not to spend the pawn ticket money, Cliff should have sobered up and gone himself.

Marty walked her home. Not wanting to burn in his pattern of rejection, she said, "Come on up to my room for awhile, it's so high ceilinged cool. Only for a second, though, I'm rather tired."

As he gave a pawning glance around the room, his eyes went from sad dog to rat slit. In a show of faith she went behind the curtain to fix him some coffee and sandwiches, came out with a tray just as he was pocketing a miniature from the bric-a-brac shelf.

"Like my loot? Gifts from all over the world. Such a clutter. If anything pleases you, just help yourself."

While she spread one of her best lace cloths to make him feel somebody, the miniature reappeared.

"Maybe if I'd grown up with you things'd been different."

"Things can be different as of now. Look on this as a kind of home."

"I'll do that Ladybug" . . . Her nickname fairly stroked with affection.

"Marty, I wish I'd never made that remark about stealing the gold from your grandmother's teeth."

"Forget it, can't ya?"

"I see how you feel. You've a right to anything Clifford leaves lying around so carelessly, but let me give you a tip. As a two time offender, you're taking a needless chance when you—"

"Lay off. It don't give you no license to say what you like just because you're old—"

His eyelid twitching, he could be a drug addict, do any horrible thing under its influence . . . almost upset the table getting to his feet . . . paced the room short of its length as he must have paced his cell.



She couldn't very well take to the door in panic . . . went behind the curtain with the dishes. He gave the curtain such a jerk that the rod gave way . . . kept her back to him, heard, almost felt, his breathing.

His heel screamed on the hardwood floor . . . a turning, a going . . . down the stairs . . . the outer door closed safe.

Sitting on the bar stool next night, he stared as if she were space, as if he had disposed of her so many times in his mind that she couldn't possibly exist.

Days of Marty cold eyeing her, had her jumping at sounds in the night, footsteps on the stairs, every ring of the house bell. She almost didn't answer when her doorbell rang just as she was thinking of starting over to Vic's after a week away. Fay stumbling up the stairs with her newest bed boy, his eyes close set . . . never trust anyone with close set eyes.

"Fay, you're in no condition. Besides, I was just starting out."

"Th'thanks I get for coming all the way over here to see if you're all right."

Fay, her coarse angel with whipcord grey hair. At her laughing best walking her collie with the wind, in such a rushing step you couldn't tell which one was straining at the leash.

"C'mon Ladybug get out the bourbon you're hiding, this is it. Len may look anemic, but tha's because he gives of his juice, the strapping ones hoard it."

"Now that's enough, Fay. No more of that talk."

Fay lowered the venetian blinds . . . windows open all around to radios, vocalizing, dogs barking, the into summer sounds . . . always her first act on entering a room, to lower the blinds, when she looked ready to throw the windows wide . . . "The bourbon, Ladybug, bring on the bourbon. I know all about your—"

"Strong black coffee is all I'll—"

"Why you old——"

"Watch your language around here, Fay. I've already warned you."

Behind the curtain making the coffee she could hear their rather noisy lovemaking, and when she came out with the coffee they were rolling on the floor, it could happen then and there. The percolator fell from her hands, spilling coffee all over her Oriental.

"Get up, will you please? I won't have anything like this in my home."

"Why you——"

Knew how Fay could curse, but this . . . "You're to go—you're not to come here anymore" . . . spoken in lady tones more demolishing than a loud voice . . . "not because you're the passion plus you think you are. Sex, you've no more sex than a potato. That's why you go from man to man. You're dead below. You feel nothing. That's your obscenity."

Fay picked up the crystal paperweight, came at her with it.  
"Don't, Fay, don't" . . . splitting pain . . . blood blind . . . black . . .

"Ladybug" . . . "Who'd want to kill Ladybug?" . . . down the short length of Vic's bar . . . "A little eighty-two-year-old lady" . . . "only weighed ninety-six pounds" . . . "had nothing" . . . "told her she should keep her door locked" . . . "last seen in a pet shop buying food for her turtle" . . . "other roomers heard no sounds" . . . "not robbery, nothing taken" . . . "three dollars and twenty-three cents still in her purse" . . . "saw nobody come or go" . . . "no obit page for Lady bug, she's front page news" . . . "always inviting strangers up to her room" . . . "a gay grandma," one paper says, "with many men friends" . . . she'd get a kick out of that" . . . "would like to be right here at the bar with us, talking over her own murder" . . . "Could it have been suicide, do you think?" . . . "Brutal attack, skull fractured" . . . "kicked, beaten" . . . "blood splattered on the wall, the rug" . . . "Who could hate her that much?" . . . "the police will have a time questioning everyone she knew" . . . "she was Vic's" . . . "fanned us open with a flick of her wrist" . . . "our Ladybug" . . .



*Hans Neuberger*

## Sculptured Woman

I know this dread  
Erosion wrought  
By covert floods  
That never brought

Their fury to light,  
This face carved  
With creviced design  
Like that of earth caved

Over buried hope.  
I know this hurt,  
This numbness  
Of the heart

That veiled these eyes  
And bent this head;  
I know the hand  
On which it lies.

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SWAMP

*Charles Hardman*

## The Great Dismal

(Adapted from the forthcoming book, SOUTHERN FLOWERS)

Gloomy, brooding lowlands, the Great Dismal that lay between Carolina and Virginia was such a frightful place that the early colonists were afraid to go near it. Wild tales were told about this swamp. People got lost in it and never came out. It was filled with "poisonous plants and horrible serpents". The runaway slaves and fugitives from justice who had fled there had produced a race of "wild men".

In colonial times, the word *dismal* meant swamp. The Latin origin is supposedly from two words: *dies mali*, and has to do with the "unlucky days" of the Romans. When the colonists saw "Great Dismal" written on their maps of Carolina and Virginia, they read "Great Swamp". This area was for many years a barrier between the two young colonies. Little was known about it, and what was known had been found out mostly by accident. Governor Drummond of North Carolina got lost once on a hunting trip and discovered a fantastic lake in the very heart of the swamp.

To the celebrated William Byrd of Virginia who had to survey the state line right through it, the Great Dismal was a thorn in the flesh. He hated it and wrote that it was such a loathsome place that not even a turkey buzzard would venture to fly over it. He pictured it as a place where no animal nor bird life existed at all. Even the air was not fit to breathe. Something was supposed to poison the air so that runaway slaves who hid there would soon succumb and die within its borders.

In spite of damaging enlargements on what was partly true about swamps, however, there was one real champion of the Great Dismal. George Washington conceived the idea that it was really "a glorious paradise". Quantities of "juniper" timber that grew there attracted Washington's attention. After a number of visits to it, he organized a lumber company and had a canal dug, now known as the "Washington ditch", for the purpose of taking out lumber and draining, as he thought, the outer-lying lowlands into "Drummond Pond".

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A surprise was in store for the engineers who cut the first canal into Great Dismal, however: instead of draining water into lake Drummond, their canal let water out of it! What these engineers did not know was that the interior of the swamp is higher than the lands around it. Like all the great swamps up and down the Atlantic Coast, Great Dismal was partly caused by the elevation of the old sea bottom in geological times, so that the water could not run off to the sea as it could off the surrounding area. The other factor in the great swamp's creation was the accumulation of a mass of dead vegetable matter underneath the water where it could not decay completely. Nature piled up here a giant blotter of peat which can hold from twice to ten times its own weight of water. In times of drought, the water level outside the swamp goes down, and then the waters pour out of Great Dismal to wet the thirsty lands. In modern times, considerable portions of the swamp have been taken into cultivation. Peat fires have destroyed large areas, too. Nevertheless, the big reservoir still furnishes enough water through a "feeder canal" with a lock in it to supply the inland waterway.

In the years before the Great Dismal was nearly destroyed by a lowered water table and lumbering operations, a trip into it up the feeder canal through the wilderness of reeds and shrubs that lies outside the swamp forest was a revelation of Nature's greatest abundance. To glide over the coffee colored waters between high banks smothered with flowering shrubs and vines was like a magic trip through a flower show. The rich black peat soil in these shrub bogs is the natural home of many acid soil lovers. In the summer the air was heavy with the scent of blue-berry blossoms, a promise to the bears that their feast would be ready before long.

At the moment your boat passed from the sunshiny bog into the swamp forest, twilight descended. Buttressed trunks of gum and cypress trees rose from a mirror of jet black water to support a canopy forty feet above, through which light came but sparingly. Here sat a landscape upon a glass, all lighted from above. Where a beam did penetrate the twilight, it lit upon a miracle of soft grey maple trunks or made a thousand tiny reflectors of shiny bay and holly leaves. Looking back, no way was out. Only the denizens of the swamp knew what was where or where was where. In a moment, even the ripples on the water would subside, and you were lost in the mystery of the "dark swamp".

When the water was low, the root-like cypress "knees" which extended upward from the floor of the forest to a point just a little above high water seemed to people the whole area with fantastic little wooden gnomes. In some places it was possible to walk about, but what appeared to be land was really peat so deep that one could not plumb to the bottom of it with a walking stick. In late summer, bears would hang precariously from the limbs of the high trees where grape vines were filled with ripening fruits.

Only a cleared passage way for boats led deeper into the swamp. Proceeding along this aisle past the mighty trees, one could eventually see a tiny opening into the light in the distance. Human chatter and the noise of a boat were swallowed up in the not-to-be-interrupted stillness of the great swamp. On and on one went, farther and farther into the unknown until suddenly the boat passed from the dark forest into the light of Lake Drummond, inner sanctum of Great Dismal.

Lake Drummond, darling of poets and nature lovers, has long been the dread of explorers and surveyors. This body of water, fed by seasonal rains and hurricanes and possibly by a connection with a river, is one of the most isolated lakes in the South. Except for the removal of the forests about it, the lake has apparently not been changed much from what it used to be. Around the edges, stumps and limbs of dead cypresses make passage toward the open water most difficult, but beyond this maze, the personality of the lake asserts itself completely. Beautifully shaped old cypresses still stand around the silent shores. Most of these trees are dead and have long since been given names to suit the imagination of man, alone in the swamp. They can never decay and are privileged to remain, the dead with the living, until some northeaster or hurricane whipping into the Norfolk region finally lowers them into the water. Even then, the cypress water will preserve their wood indefinitely. These are the natural phenomena which make the swamp a place of perpetual life with perpetual death.

On the northern side of the lake, the presence of a little forest of cypresses is a hopeful sign that the trees, destroyed in the past, are beginning to return. A young cypress is as lovely a conifer as grows. In the spring and summer, its spiral branches are covered with the tenderest green needles . . . reminiscent of the California Redwoods to which the cypresses are closely akin. There is deception in the beauty of these needles, however, for when the first frost arrives in the autumn, down they come, leaving the branches as bare as a maple in winter.

When the water in the lake is very low, the cypress knees are exposed above the surface just as they are in the swamp. Their purpose is, essentially, to breathe for the submerged root system. In olden times, the settlers found the cypress knees exceedingly useful as wooden buckets. Since they are hollow inside, all a man had to do to make a perfect bucket was to saw off a cypress knee and hang it, upside down, in his well. Many of these buckets are still hanging in the wells of the Low Country today.

In a region where hurricanes are a yearly occurrence, the reinforcement, which both the cypresses and the gums have in the form of their buttressed trunks and extensive root systems, helps them to stand up to the great pressure of the terrible winds. Rooted in mud,

the trees do not have much purchase on the soil beneath them and need every aid to stability.

Two species of cypress grow in the Low Country from Chesapeake Bay to Texas. The Bald Cypress is the denizen of deep water swamps, while the Pond Cypress inhabits the slightly higher terrain and is to be found in the shallow swamps and ponds along the river bottoms and near the edges of flat country swamp lands. Ordinarily, Pond Cypress is a smaller tree and has much more dramatically buttressed trunks than its relative in the deeper waters. In their youth stages, both species have the attractive conical shape typical of all young specimens of the Pine Family. In old age, however, they lose this shape entirely. By the time of their maturity, all the branches are gone from the trunks and the ones in the tops of the trees form a sort of flattened head. The long, branchless straight trunks without knots or imperfections make them the ideal timber trees.

Thomas Hariot's excitement over the cypress in Albemarle Sound was well justified. No other tree in the New World turned out to be more valuable. Cypress lumber has an endless number of uses, especially because of the presence of a preservative oil in the wood. Boats and canoes were made from cypress in the early days, and still are, because of their resistance to water. Some of the big trees were large enough to make a boat that would carry thirty barrels when they were hollowed out, Indian fashion. The white men soon devised a scheme for fastening two of these tree-boats together so that they could carry from eighty to one hundred barrels. Strong and seaworthy, these boats even bore men and produce safely out into the open sea from Albemarle Sound to Chesapeake Bay.

Sleek-barked and straight, the gums stand in contrast to the thin-barked cypresses in the "dark swamp". Two kinds of gums are found commonly in the coastal swamps, both with enlarged bases. The Water Gum or Sour Gum is a comparatively small tree while its relative, the Tupelo, often attains great size, but they both may develop a very large base when growing in deep water. Tupelos have been found as much as fifteen feet in circumference, and gum lumber is very desirable for interior finishes.

In years gone by, one of the most important trees in the swamp was the White Cedar or "Juniper", as it was called. Large stands of it were owned by lumbering companies in Virginia and North Carolina. Its beautiful timber was much prized in the early days for its lightness and the ease with which it could be worked. People wanted it for their houses because the long shingles called "shakes" could be split from it with little effort, and a roof covered with them was very light, yet durable and strong. In ship-building this wood was sought after because its toughness made it desirable for top masts, bolt spirits, yards and booms. The tree was given the name White

Cedar because the wood had the odor of the Red Cedar and the two species had many characteristics in common.

Normally, the White Cedar grows to about forty feet and has a diameter of from two to three feet. The little cones are no bigger than a pea, and the trees are extremely beautiful in exposed places where their branches are well developed.

Many old timers say that the most dismal of all the swamps were the areas covered with these trees. One might walk in circles for days through miles of such "Christmas trees" without ever finding the way out. In such a swamp, there was no overhead canopy like that provided by the gums and cypresses of the dark swamp. For this reason, the name "light swamp" was given to both the region and the timber which grew there.

The White Cedar is the most exacting of all the swamp trees about the conditions under which it will regenerate after forest fires. That is why there is so little of it in the Southern States. After the Virginia and North Carolina stands were cut, they failed in most cases to return to their areas, for, if fire destroys the upper layer of peat on which these trees are growing, the new forest which follows is apt to be made up of pond pine, swamp black gum and maple. For the successful regeneration of White Cedar, it seems that there has to be a continuous maintenance of the water table underneath the peat, at somewhere near the level over which the original forest was growing. In addition to this condition, there must be enough seeds in the peat or from trees nearby to sow a new forest. When the little trees come up on the peat, they are in for a terrific struggle with other vegetation. Perhaps their worst enemy is the rampant Southern Smilax which grows rapidly from its underground storage of plant food. In no time at all, the young White Cedar trees may find themselves clothed from head to foot with vines which envelope and choke to death everything within their reach. Under the best conditions, however, the young trees come up in such thick stands that they manage to shade out all the competing bushes and vegetation of every kind.

On the western side of Great Dismal, the old Washington Ditch, which was originally only fifteen feet wide, provided for years a beautiful entrance into the swamp. There was a hostelry in the swamp which was reached by this waterway. The great forest canopy overhead was hardly impaired at all by the digging of so narrow a canal, and the trees grew back together immediately, so that the waterway is today a beautiful passage through "dark swamp".

Part of the desolation of Lake Drummond is owing to the absence of certain plants which we are accustomed to see floating on water. Here are no water lilies—none of the aquatic beauties which almost completely cover the face of the Great Okefinokee farther



south. There is but one thing, the incomparable water mirror, that relieves the loneliness of "Drummond Pond". Every mood of the sky is reflected in it—every tiny cloud—at night, every star, and to those few who have seen it, the eeriest of moons. It is one thing to see the sunset at sea, but it is quite another to see it duplicated in the still surface of Lake Drummond.

*Robert Sward*

## The Mountain

The mountain stood  
like an act begun,  
and in the tilting  
back of the sledge,

the direction, the strata  
and the stone grains of the man  
were as the mountain's, spine-  
risen, unbroken and black

as the peak that stands  
twice the width of the moon,

. . . and then downward,  
into the falling  
of what could never stop,

. . . and there was no head  
after the sledge had fallen,  
and the mountain smiled  
white as an act complete,

and slept long as a sledge,  
untilted and clean  
as the bit of death  
that had been a head.

ROBERT SWARD, formerly associated with the Bread Loaf School, Middlebury, Vermont, is now an instructor in English at the University of Indiana. Mr Sward's poetry has most recently been published in *The Saturday Review*.



## The Life of Peter King

It was back in 1848 when Indians roamed Texas. Almost every wagon did not get through but the ones that did were very lucky. There was one wagontrain that said that they would get through. There were 7 wagontrains, every body going were relatives, the name of the family was King. There was one baby his name was Peter King. When they were ten miles from there distination Indians attached and killed every man child and women. The baby when the Indians attaked fell out. One day later he had crawld unto the woods where feirce animals roamed. Many people died, there the baby grew and grew, he drank from the branches and he ate grapes, oranges, peaches, cherries, lemons. He was 4 now, he was now frends with the animals he knew each one by his own name. By 4 his clothes were raged, now he threw rocks and hit deers and things like that and took rocks and cut it open rubed it until it was soft and took it and cut it in stripes with a sharp rock. Then he took a tooth of a Mountain lion and started to sew. He sewed for two days and sewed pants and shirts blankets, tents, coats. Then he grew bigger and bigger.

He was 9 now, he did not have schooling, but he was wise. Now he was going to try to make it to a town, he walked for days and days. One day he was in a valley he could not find any water. He found a little cave then he fell asleep. In the morning he found a colt by his side he was after the sugar under him. Then the boy thought of some thing in 5 minutes he was dressed, he took the sugar out of the cave and put it on a rock. Then he got back in the cave and ran and jumped on the little half year colt, he bucked and bucked but the boy kept on because of the vine rains. But the colt just rembemberd the sugar, he ran over to the rock where the sugar was. Every morning he did the same thing for a month. In the night Peter took skins and kept right on makeing a sadal and bridil. After he had finished the next morning he tried it on his colt for size, it was all right.

The next morning the little stream in the cave had given out and he had to find more water, it was 6 o'clock in the morning. The boy



HARRY PETERSON, eight-year-old from Leland, N. C., hopes to complete work on Peter King while continuing his studies at Leland Grammar School. This is his first published work.

got the sadal and bridel and he started for the colt, but he could not find the colt. He looked all over the valley but he could not find the colt. Now he was going to look out of the valley, the moment he was out of the valley he heard a wheckering of a colt, he went back in the valley, he knew that he was not daydreaming, but he had looked over all of the valley but he wanted water and his colt so he was willing to look agian, so he started looking.

First he started at the deep rocks and searched all over the valley agian, then he thought it is probly a hidden place and he looked all around the valley, then he started mashing the rocks for an entrance to some hidden place. When he got to a big rock he could not push it over then he took another rock and knocked over a tree with 20 knocks of the rock, he took the little tree and pushed and pushed until it was over, in the ground was a hole. And going down was a stone stair going into an under ground cave.

He went down and down until he was a long way down, then he found a little spring, and next he found a little room, he was quite and in the room was his colt and a man with a leather whip. He could not help getting *mad* except he did something wrong he stepped on a stick and broke it and the man heard him and turned around and as the man turned around, the colt ran and knocked him down and the man ran the wrong way and the boy and the colt ran the way where the man went and there was a stone stair their too.

The stair lead to a cave when the boy Peter got far enough he knew the cave, it was the one he had lived in for months. The next morning he had moved to the under ground cave. The next day he was thinking about moveing, that night he had a lot of skin so he made about 24 canteans, he had a lot more and it was still early so he made 5 sacks. The next morning he took the sacks and picked fruits and things and put in the bag. Then he took the canteans, and put water in it to the top. That night he went to the old cave that he used to sleep in. So the next morning he got every thing he made and what he had, so he got the colt and bridal and saddle he had made. He was ready to go find a town of some kind, so he put the sacks on his back and got on the colts back. It was night now. He stoped in a gorge and found a shelter he got more water in his canteans that night he was asleep before you could say jack rabbit.

The next morning he was up early at six, he had gotten some bird eggs, then came the task of making the fire, he had a clean flat rock to cook his food on, after he had eaten the eggs and a few berries he gathard all his things and put them in his bags. Then he got his sadel and bridel and put it on the colt, then he got on the colt.

Then that night he got eggs and things and put them in one of his 5 bags, he had about every one filled to the top. In the morning he did the same thing he did other mornings. Many, many days

passed his food gave out and so did his water he had only 3 eggs and 50 berries and only 3 pints of water. By the next day at 9 o'clock in the morning he had only 1 egg, 5 berries, half of a pint of water, if the boy did not find any thing to eat and drink in 1 or 2 days he would die.

The next day at 1 o'clock in the evening he he hardly had any hope, but he had a little hope, but it seemed no good because there was hardly no chance of living. It did not feel to good of thinking of dying that day he tried not to think of it but he couldn't stop thinking about dying, but the brave boy kept on riding.

When he had passed a big ridge he saw something, he kept on riding until he saw a gost town when he had reached the old town he got off his colt and looked in the old stores and things, then he looked in the Saloon, there he found old rugs and things and a good spot for sleeping and cooking. Then he went to get his colt but he could not find him. Then he started looking high and low for him, then he saw him in the rocks, and he went over in the rocks to get him. He did not walk over to him he ran over there, when he got there he started to scold but then he saw something. It was a little waterfall coming out of the ground and right next to it were fruits and a few vegetable plants. The boy lead the colt to the saloon then he looked in the livery stable and found a little bit of hay and oats, then he saw a little door in the room, what the door led to was bails and bails of hay and about 50 sack of oats enough for 3 years and they were all fixed up for a few years. When he went in the saloon he triped over a barrel with a spicket in the bottom. The next day he had made a leather pipe from the spring to the barrel and he had a water spicket.

The next day the boy had killed a few more animals so he had enough skin to make something, and he had thought of something to make. By noon he had made another skin pipe and he was going to make a food pipe, the next morning it was done it lead up the mountain where the stream was there was diferint kind of food bushes and in the morning he would come and roll them down the pipe and he would not have to pick them all the time.

When he went down the hill to the Saloon where he lived, he saw horse tracks along the way. When he got to the town at the bottem he still saw the tracks then he saw that the tracks lead to the General Store. He had a notion to follow the tracks when he got to the store he walked carefully, he looked through the door, no one was in the store so he walked in, he didn't find any thing that would indecate that some one was living here. The next morning he wanted to look around the place some more. There was old rags, old paper, trash of every kind, he was so mad at finding nothing he threw old things around. One of the boxes hit the side of a wall, and a door opened, he looked down stairs, there were about 50 yards of stairs

then he walked down to the ground then all at once the stairs folded up and the boy couldn't get out. Then next thing he knew he saw a man it was the same man he met 7 months ago, the man that tried to get his colt. Then the man took hold on his arm and led him to a dark room where there were whips and hanging ropes. It was now noon.

*Samuel Hazo*

## Diminuendo

It was a time of diminution,  
little Fay.  
I watched you scatter jacks  
across a hopscotched road—  
a time for play.

In me you saw the stranger  
children see.  
You picked, picked up jacks,  
then silenced both your hands  
between your knees.

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## The Wagon Wheel

Now I have a hard time remembering just exactly how the Wagon Wheel looked before all the windows and doors were boarded up with two-by-fours nailed criss-cross over them. I rode down there on my bicycle not long ago and peeped through a knothole in one of the boards over a window, and the inside was big and dark and empty, like a skating rink when there are no people skating. The long, green-striped canopy that led up to the front door is gone, and so is the big neon wheel that turned round and round, flashing on and off and changing color from yellow to greenish to blue. It's real hard to imagine the driveway and the parking lot filled with rows and rows of shiny new cars, because the blacktop part of it is crumbly and full of holes and the tracks in the gravel are gone and the rocks are spread out all even, like on roads that aren't used much. There used to be cars parked down there at night from all sorts of different places—from counties up in the Delta and even from Memphis, which is pretty far.

Somehow it all seems like a long time ago and I don't think about the Wagon Wheel or Mr. Marcolis much any more. I just remember that day right before it closed. I remember it real clear, which is funny, because it wasn't a very important day except that Aunt Della had won fifty dollars playing bingo the night before. Of course I was pretty happy about that, and I was up before Sara Jane and Aunt Della and had eaten breakfast and picked up a boxful of the pecans that were just beginning to fall off the two trees in our yard. Then I went downtown, like I always do, walking part of the way on the railroad tracks and counting crossties. I had to go to Penly's Grocery Store and to the Post Office, so I stopped by Penly's first. . . .

"It's scandalous, that's what it is," Mrs. Penly was saying when I came in, "and if I had something to say about it. . ." she snipped the checked material with big black-handled scissors and ripped it straight across. Her eyes had about as much color as the unframed glasses pushed up on her grayish hair, and she pursed her mouth into a small, pale pucker. Mrs. Sewell, a giant size woman with angular arms and shoulders, was standing on the other side of the counter, her big feet solid and black in lace-up shoes—old lady shoes, Aunt Della calls them. She nodded, jutting her jaw out to one side.

FRANCES BENNETT of Madison, Mississippi, is a University of North Carolina graduate this year, majoring in French. This is her first published story.

"Naturally it's none of my business," she said, leaning across the counter, "just as I told Mamie when she called me this morning, but with Sara Jane president of Youth Fellowship and teaching Sunday School and all, it looks to me like Della. . ." She turned around about this time and saw me standing by the bread and cracker shelves out in the middle of the store, and made a big, wrinkled frown to Mrs. Penly. I guess they hadn't heard me come in because I was wearing my sneakers since it was Saturday and I always wear sneakers on Saturday. But not on schooldays—I have brown and white saddle oxfords for that.

"Why good mornin', Lucy Ann," Mrs. Penly said just as sweet as could be, like she was real glad and surprised to see me. "Can I do something for you?" She hooked some falling wisps of hair behind her ear and came out from behind the material counter.

"Good morning, Mrs. Penly, Mrs. Sewell," I said, playing like I hadn't even heard them and didn't know all the time what they were talking about. "I just want a loaf of bread and some ketchup, and I can get that." I picked up a loaf of bread after squeezing it a little to see if it was fresh, and went on to the back of the store where the ketchup was. Albert, the big, red-faced boy who helps the Penlys on Saturdays came out of the wareroom carrying a great big box that said 'Delsey, soft as Facial Tissue' on the side in blue letters. He looked kind of embarrassed at me seeing him carrying it, and he hurried around the cheese and bologna counter, shoving the box under it with his foot. I felt like giggling but I didn't.

"Hi, Lucy Ann," he said, looking at some place just behind my left ear. The veins in his neck were popped up and purplish. "Want me to get something for you?" He grinned, showing big, gapped teeth.

"No thank you, Albert," I said, grown-up and polite, "just some ketchup and I can. . ." But already he had raced down to where the ketchup was and grabbed a bottle, wiping the dust off it with his shirt sleeve. He came around pretty close to me and said in a low voice, pretending we were real friendly,

"Say, is it really true your Aunt Della won seventy-five dollars playing bingo at the Wagon Wheel?" He squinted up his eye in something I suppose he thought was a wink. I didn't even answer him, just took the bottle of ketchup and started walking on up to the front of the store with him following right behind me.

A few other people had come in the store by this time. There was Mr. Rivers, the mail rider, and Mr. Case who manages the Cantwell place and is all the time talking about the "nigger problem" and "we've got to take the law in our own hands", and Miss Gladys Snow who lives by herself in a big dark house and is crippled in one foot and people say she makes out horoscopes and believes in rein-



carnation. Miss Gladys looked at me with those blue eyes of hers that always remind me of Teeka, our Siamese cat, when she sits staring at the fire.

"Lucy Ann," she stopped me, putting her thin white hand on my shoulder, "tell your Aunt Della how much I've enjoyed the fig preserves, and thank her." Her voice was loud and soft at the same time, like whispering in the culvert where the creek runs under the road.

"Yes ma'am," I smiled, glad that she was there because Albert had to keep on walking when I stopped.

"She's a fine woman," went on Miss Gladys, "she never forgets the sick and the shut-ins." Which was a very funny thing to say, because Miss Gladys can walk well enough to get to town for the mail every day, and even though she is pretty old, she doesn't look sick.

Albert was up by the door, holding it open for me, his hand sprawled against the sign that says "Colonial is Good Bread" on the outside of the screen. It seemed to me he sort of stuck his foot in my way.

"I heard Mr. Case and the constable and Brother Walker talking yesterday, and they said they were goin' to get Mr. Marcolis out of town and close up the Wagon Wheel."

"What do I care about that?" I said, shrugging my shoulders and trying to get by him.

"Oh, I don't know," he smiled a sneery smile, "your Aunt Della might not like it so much since she goes there all the time to play bingo."

"You see anything wrong with that?" I was getting pretty mad by this time.

"Oh, I reckon not, but Brother Walker says it's the same as gambling, and a sin right on. Course now, you know me—it don't hurt me none."

I didn't bother to answer him. Just pushed right on by and walked out across the street toward the Post Office. The sun was so bright it hurt my eyes, but it sure did feel good and warm through my corduroy jacket. I hate the fall when it gets rainy and cold and you have to wear galoshes, but there are some days—glittery, cool-warm days when the bricks on the walks gets so bright you wish you could be an old alley cat and just lie down and spread all over them, and all the unraked leaves shine like copper—well, those days I like almost as much as summertime. They're good days for thinking about everything, and I have a lot to think about sometimes.

I never did mind anything that Aunt Della did. Goodness, she's been really wonderful to Sara Jane and me ever since Mama died, and I didn't care if she liked to play bingo or anything else. She's fifty years old, and by the time you get to be fifty years old you

ought to know what's right and wrong, in spite of all the things Sara Jane says. Sara Jane is a senior in high school this year and is president of Youth Fellowship and is going to be a religious education worker when she gets out of college. She can act right mean at times, though, even though she's a very religious person. I never will forget last Christmas when Aunt Della had all the Missionary Society at our house and served English plum pudding. She poured whiskey over it and set it on fire, then brought it in the dining room burning all over with little purple-blue flames. Well, when Sara Jane saw it, she glared at Aunt Della because she knew perfectly well it was the whiskey that was burning like that. Then she turned to the ladies sitting beside her and said in her sweet, put-on voice,

"Isn't it the nicest thing to burn lemon extract on plum pudding?" And the ladies cocked their heads and said my goodness, is that what makes it burn? And Sara Jane smiled at them, nodding,

"Don't you all just love plum pudding?"

Can you imagine that! She told a downright lie in front of everybody! And after the Missionary Society left, she jumped all over Aunt Della.

"What do you mean doing something like that?" She stood in front of Aunt Della who was sitting down at the table.

"Doing what, Sara Jane?" Aunt Della looked up.

"Putting whiskey on that pudding! You just want to disgrace us in front of the Missionary Society!" She clenched her teeth together. "You can be the meanest. . ." Aunt Della looked at her with a funny, hurt look in her eyes at first, but then she started laughing a little,

"Those old biddies would simply die if they knew they had touched a drop of alcohol!" She shook her head back and forth. Sara Jane whirled around and flounced off to her room without saying another word. She didn't come to supper that night and hardly spoke to Aunt Della for weeks afterward. But Aunt Della and I had a good time even though Sara Jane was in such a bad mood. We read a lot of books together and went on the bus all the way to Jackson and saw a picture show. We went to the Capitol, too, and looked at a real Egyptian mummy they have there. She used to be a queen, but it's hard to believe when you see her lying there behind that glass case, little and wrapped up like a cocoon, with her face like a dried-up prune that somebody's punched at to make a mouth and nose. Then we visited this lady that used to be a friend of Aunt Della's when she was young. She lives in a great big house with a fish pool and camelia and cape jasmine bushes in the front of it. She and Aunt Della laughed a lot and had pretty pink drinks in frosty glasses and I had a lemonade and some cookies.

Things had been pretty bad, though, ever since Mr. Marcolis had built the Wagon Wheel out on the highway just outside of town.



Of course nobody much from our town ever went there, but there was always a crowd of cars and people around it at night. They say he sold whiskey and had gambling tables in the back rooms, but I don't believe that because it's against the law in our county.

But anyway, back in the summertime, he had started having bingo games for money from eight o'clock to ten—sort of a game for the ladies. Aunt Della started going with the lady from Jackson I was telling about and some others about the same age. They would drive up in a big car and get Aunt Della, then off they'd go to play bingo. Aunt Della seemed to really have fun seeing all the friends she used to know. They'd play once or twice a week and she'd come back about ten-thirty at night looking almost as pretty as some of her young-girl pictures do. Sara Jane was perfectly furious, though, but there wasn't much she could do about it. She would say to me and Aunt Della,

"I think it's horrible that a common thug from up North is allowed to come down and corrupt a Christian community!" Aunt Della would get mad at this and tell her,

"He is not a thug, just a businessman, and he has more breeding and manners than most of the men around here."

"A gangster and a hoodlum!" Sara Jane would spit out. "Everyone knows it."

"They should mind their own business!" Then Aunt Della would get tired of arguing, shrug her shoulders, and look at me. "More of a gentleman than they are." But she'd say it low, so Sara Jane couldn't quite hear.

I thought Mr. Marcolis was a gentleman, too. I had seen him now and then in the post office, and he always took off his hat to me and let me go out the door first. He was a good-looking man—tall, with tanned skin and shiny black eyes, and his hair didn't look greasy at all, like most thugs in the movies. I thought it was terrible that nobody would speak to him when they met him on the street or in the post office, because he always smiled at everyone, like he really wanted to be friendly and all.

That Wagon Wheel really did cause a ruckus in town. Every Sunday Brother Walker always managed to get something into his sermon about "dens of iniquity" and Babylon and Sodom. Even the older kids in high school were mad about it, mostly because their parents wouldn't trust them to go anywhere but to prayer meeting and Youth Fellowship. I heard some of the men in town had been having meetings about it, and Mr. Case was elected as sort of a president. I don't know why they did that except that he is the biggest man and has the loudest voice and is a deacon in the church. But whether he's so good or not I'm not sure. Once he beat up a Negro boy on his place and that boy was in the hospital for two weeks, and one time I saw him throw a whiskey bottle out of his

pickup truck. It probably was just one he found, because he's always saying how he hates liquor. I wondered a lot about what those men were going to do, but Sara Jane is always telling me not to meddle in grown-up affairs, so I didn't talk about it even to Aunt Della.

Our Post Office is real nice. We have new boxes of shiny brass with a little wheel in the middle to point to numbers for the combination. Ours is seven, back to three and a half, then back to six—easy as can be. And Miss Harriet Hodges, the postmistress, knows everybody and is always friendly. She spoke to me that morning even before I had gotten the mail out of our box.

"Good morning, Lucy Ann," At times she looks just like a parakeet behind her little cage. "Expecting a love letter today?" She always says that to me just as a joke every time I come in the post office, knowing perfectly well that if I *did* have one I'd tear the silly old thing up and throw it in the waste basket right under the pictures that say Wanted For Forgery.

"Good morning, Miss Harriet," I said right back to her, laughing a little about the joke just to show her I knew it *was* a joke. I started out of the post office with the mail—just circulars, as usual—when she called me back.

"Come here just a minute, honey," She was right up next to the bars and her nose sort of poked through like a beak. "Is it really true your Aunt Della won a hundred dollars playing bingo?"

"No ma'am."

"What?"

"It was fifty," I said, rubbing the toe of my sneaker against the floor and getting black smudges on it. I wanted to get out of there.

"Well, I declare!" She wobbled back a little, like a bird about to fall off a perch. "I heard it was a hundred, but fifty dollars is . . ."

"I have to go." I backed up toward the door and went out as fast as I could without seeming rude.

The sun was like two warm hands on my back right where the shoulder blades stick out and it felt real good. I straightened up, thinking about how Aunt Della said she was going to make me swallow a poker if I didn't hold my shoulders up. I put my feet down light, one right ahead of the other, like Indians do. Wearing sneakers make me feel like an Indian, anyway—soft and silent and kind of sly.

I walked right on down the street past the barber shop and the filling station with the big hanging orange sign shaped like a shell and by the Baptist Church, square and shiny-white in the sunshine. Just as I got even with the parsonage with its green shutters and two straight water oak trees in the front yard, Henry Walker came running from behind the house chasing a scrawny cat that had a paper bag over its head.

"Catch him, Lucy Ann," little Henry yelled at me, so I grabbed the cat just as it ran by my legs. I took the bag off his head and the poor thing tried to scratch me because it was so scared. And skinny! That cat was so skinny I could see his heart beating right underneath the straggly yellow fur.

"Nice kit," I said, stroking it, "don't be scared, kitty."

"It ain't nothin' but a stray," Henry said, standing up there looking mighty big for a seven-year-old.

"You mustn't tease animals, Henry," I told him, using my school-teacher voice, "it's very cruel and bad." He pouted his lower lip out and twisted one of the buttons on his shirt.

"It ain't nothin' but a stray," he said again, looking up at me once, then skittering off, unconcerned. I watched him reach down and grab up a long stick, jabbing it in the ground as he ran. I don't know what gets into that child sometimes.

There I was, standing there with the cat and the mail under my arm, and trying to hold on to the sack with the bread and ketchup. I put the cat down easy, and he rubbed up against my legs and meowed, looking up at me with big yellow-green eyes. I saw then I'd have to take him home, but I knew Aunt Della wouldn't mind—we feed so many old stray dogs and cats that one more couldn't make any difference. Sara Jane hates cats, though, so I'd have to sneak it by her. I guess she doesn't like them because Moppy, our old mother cat, had a batch of kittens on her choir robe and she had to throw it away afterward. But, as Aunt Della said, she shouldn't have left it lying around. For fun, Aunt Della and I named two of the kittens Hallelujah and Amen, and now they're just about my favorites.

Well, Sack and I (I decided that was a good name since I found him in a bag) went on down the street together and cut across the school yard. School looks so funny on Saturday—empty and hollow and lonesome. Under the trees the acorns had been stepped on till they looked like June bugs with all the insides scrunched out, and the leaves on the grass were sticking up like little bright brown birds. I started to take one go 'round on the spinning jinny, but instead I just gave it a push. It began a slow whirl, like a merry-go-round just starting up. I kept on walking, and when I looked back it was still moving around—a crazy thing, moving all by itself in the empty schoolyard.

When I got home I could tell Sara Jane and Aunt Della had had a real fuss, and of course I knew what it was about. Sara Jane was shut up in her room, reading her Bible, I suppose, and Aunt Della was in the kitchen singing like she always does when she doesn't want anyone to know something is wrong. She was glad to see Sack and me, and gave him a saucer of milk, both of us squatting down on the kitchen floor beside him watching his pink tongue lap in and out so fast you could hardly see it. When he finished the milk he curled up

right by the stove and went sound asleep. I thought it would be a good time as any to say something to Aunt Della about winning at bingo, so I said,

"I think it's just grand you won all that money last night." She laughed and mussed my hair up over my forehead.

"Oh, yes," she nodded, "I'd almost forgotten—it was fun." But then she shook her head and frowned. "But it isn't worth it—even a little harmless fun isn't worth it."

"What do you mean, Aunt Della?" I was kind of scared to come right out and say it, but I did. "Is that really gambling, and a sin like Sara Jane and Brother Walker say it is?"

"Oh, good heavens, child!" She put her hands on her hips and looked at me real hard. "A sin? Oh, there are so many sins in this world—I only wish they were as simple as that." She took me by the shoulder, and her fingers were strong and light at the same time, holding me, yet not really holding me at all. "You know my playing bingo isn't a sin, don't you?"

"I guess so," I said, not real sure of anything much. "I think whatever you do is all right."

"Lucy Ann, Lucy Ann." She said it twice, just like that, and hugged me real hard once, then shoved me away and out the kitchen. As I said, Aunt Della is fifty years old, but I think she's just as pretty as can be, with two white streaks in her hair and dark blue eyes that have sparkles way down deep. And she isn't fat a bit to be as old as she is, but she isn't all dried up and skinny either, like a lot of women I know. Mrs. Penly, for instance.

Supper was just horrible, with Sara Jane sitting there not saying anything, her mouth pulled down at the corners until it looked old and ugly. Her eyes kept looking up at the ceiling as if she expected to find cobwebs or dirt-dauber nests.

"Let's all three of us catch the bus and go to Jackson next Saturday," Aunt Della clasped her hands together over her plate in the way she does when she's thinking up surprises. "Would you like that?" I swallowed my milk real fast and began to say something, but then I looked over at Sara Jane. She was looking straight at Aunt Della for the first time that night and it was exactly the same way I'd seen her look once before. It was the way I'd seen her look when I caught her sprinkling salt on a slug that was climbing up our mimosa tree—disgusted with it, but happy watching it dissolve into a milky glob. It scared me.

"No thank you, Aunt Della," she said finally, "I really don't care about going to Jackson."

"Well, I do!" I almost shouted it, but Aunt Della just got up from the table and walked slowly into the living room, touching the backs of the chairs lightly as she passed. I wanted to throw something at Sara Jane, but somehow I couldn't move. I just leaned way across the table so she could hear me.

"I hope you burn up in Hell when you die! And I hope you look all black and shriveled up just like the mummy when you do!" I felt like I was choking. Sara Jane was startled and her eyes got wide for a minute. Then she answered me in a sweet, soft voice.

"God will forgive you for that. Pray to God to forgive you." She pushed back her chair and left me alone in the dining room.

I was really ashamed of what I had said, so I tried not to think about it while I was washing the dishes. After I had finished, Aunt Della and I played scrabble for a while, and I think she let me win because she plays much better than I do. She laughed some, but it wasn't a real laugh because her eyes didn't have sparkles. I almost told her about the terrible thing I had said to Sara Jane, but I couldn't. It wasn't that important anyway.

When I finally went to bed I felt bad, just sort of knotted up inside my stomach. It was good to snuggle down under the cover and squinch my eyes up so the streetlight that shines down on the corner looked like a great big star with long jagged points shooting out from it. I would have said my prayers like I do most of the time, but I didn't feel like praying, so I just said "goodnight, God", which seems enough to me.

The very next day the Wagon Wheel was closed up, boarded, just like it is now, and Mr. Marcolis must have left town, because I haven't see him or heard anything about him since. I wonder where he is, sometimes, and if he really was a thug after all. I think about him, and how he used to be so handsome and tall, with his eyes all bright and friendly. Aunt Della looked awful when she heard he was gone, sad, almost sick, and even though Sara Jane didn't come right out and say it, I could tell how happy she was about the whole thing. She talks a lot now, to Aunt Della and to me, too. They don't have fusses like they used to and it really seems different.

We haven't been to Jackson in a long time. Aunt Della says it's too far and not worth it to go. She says she's getting too old for long bus rides and walking up and down the streets—it tires her out. I'd like to go to look in the stores, and maybe see a picture show at the Paramount, but I don't want to go to the Capitol. I think about the Egyptian mummy there a lot—think about her lying there so dead and old and ugly—just lying there behind her glass case. And you know, I guess if she was a real live queen, once she must have been young and beautiful.

John Tagliabue

## A Few Words About Modern Painting

All modern art is abstract; in fact (in different ways) all great art is abstract. It abstracts us out of confusion. By choosing certain values, certain images, to make valuable, vivid, formal, eloquent, it makes our knowledge and vitality more eloquent. It makes us better seers. I want to try to indicate slightly, perhaps cubistically, how certain artists make us better seers: Utrillo; Braque; Mondrian; Rouault; Picasso.

I don't want to be so out of date and ponderous as to say anything against "Naturalism in Art"; it is never as simple and naturalistic as theorists in opposition say. Art is art, therefore it is artifice; it is symbol, of course; in ways like dreams (and a critic is an interpreter of dreams)—and dreams are abstract in different ways, some into nightmare, some into pleasure; some going deeper into general truths than others; we are abstracted into myth and then we are flying with angels or goddesses towards the truth. Art is an escape *towards* Reality.

The best way to become acquainted with "Modern Art" is to look at, to contemplate, the works of certain modern artists. There is no "progress in art"—except the kind *we* make as seers when we become more intuitive, imaginative, more capable of love. (Appollinaire: "If we are alert, all the gods awake.") We shall only receive while we are giving. To see what Picasso saw we have to have his courage, his boldness, to create with him.

I don't think good modern art is any more difficult to understand than any good art (which is always in a way abstract: Egyptian, archaic Greek, Persian rugs, Congo statues); art often becomes popular when it becomes a public cliché—that is, commonly accepted and misunderstood. It takes time and love and the grace of God to understand anything—an Etruscan vase or an Utrillo church. We must be able to dream with the artist, perceive, I mean, beyond appearances, because he is rarely trying to describe appearances, but to give form and eloquence to the truth he has found, is

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finding, as we find it with him. (Gertrude Stein said of Picasso: "His drawings were not of things seen but of things expressed, in short they were words for him and drawing always was his only way of talking and he talks a great deal.")

All art is hieroglyphics: this is especially easy to understand when we look at the very personal and strong picture writing of Paul Klee, of Miro, of Chagall, the sad icons of Modigliani. One thing that we can say in general about modern art is the iconography has become more personal—this is true of modern poets too—Jean Cocteau, Dylan Thomas.

Schopenhauer was very wise about modern art. He said: "If raised by the power of the mind, a man relinquishes the common way of looking at things. . . if he thus ceases to consider the where, the when, the why, and the whither of things, and looks simply and solely at the what; if further, he does not allow abstract thought, the concepts of reason, to take possession of his consciousness, but, instead of all this, gives the whole power of his mind to perception, sinks himself entirely in this, and lets his whole consciousness be filled with quiet contemplation of the natural object actually present, whether a landscape, a tree, mountain, a building, or whatever it may be . . . if thus the object has to such an extent passed out of all relation to the will, then that which is so known is no longer the particular as such; but it is the idea, the eternal form, the immediate objectivity of the will at this grade; and therefore, he who is sunk in this perception is no longer individual, for in such perception the individual has lost himself; but he is pure, will-less, painless, timeless subject of knowledge."

Gertrude Stein says simply: "I am not I when I see."

I think some of the art of Braque and the non-objective art of Mondrian shows this; to me it seems like a form of Zen Buddhism. Mondrian said that he wanted his art to abstract us into calmness and contemplation where we could understand the innate, the essential pattern of things.

Picasso is less calm, more humanistic, more concerned with the comedy and tragedy of man, not just the geometry of creation; he is more comprehensive, the most inventive; he is the boldest seer and scribe. So I want to begin and end this praise with him. He has been many things in one life, a juggler, a potter, a painter primarily, a poet, a sculptor, a stage designer, a bull, a goat, a cube, a daring young man on the flying trapeze; he has gone from one high trapeze to another; the professors watching from below getting splashed in the eye now and then, maybe hit on the head by a discarded shoe of his, have given all these flights towards Himself and Art and Reality names: the Blue Period, the Pink Period, the Classic Period, the Negro Period, Analytical Cubism, Synthetic Cubism, and so on. As a matter of fact I see several professors dead, having

been whacked so hard over the head by his cubes and their own theories.

An event in history is something that happened; an event in art is something that is always happening. At first many people were shocked by the astounding and what they considered the ugly events of his art. First they were shocked by Impressionism and then they accepted it; then by Expressionism, Van Gogh, Munch, Ensor, Wagner, Ibsen; then they took these for granted; they became classics; Picasso has become in the books a classic too; but we must maintain our impudence and be astounded.

Gertrude Stein (who has come to be a kind of Confucius for us) said: "Every masterpiece came into the world with a measure of ugliness in it. That ugliness is the sign of the creator's struggle to say a new thing in a new way, for an artist can never repeat yesterday's success. And after each great creator there follows a second man who shows how it can be done easily. Picasso struggled and made his new thing and then Braque came along and showed how it could be done without pain. The Sistine Madonna of Raphael is all over the world, on grocer's calendars and on Christmas cards; everybody thinks its an easy picture. It's our business as critics to stand in front of it and recover its ugliness."

There is both passionate searching and bold success in Picasso; and so he is always a startling event, even when he is being gentle and comic; nowadays with his goats and pottery he is often sunny and comic. There is a grandeur of spontaneity in much of his work; an enthusiastic lover's capacity for boredom and boldness. (There is an amateur flare, the comedy of improvising, of make-believe, the surprises of children in many modern painters.) Picasso does not belittle himself with dull and mediocre academic finesse. He is not dead and finished, but beginning and fulfilment.

Jacques Maritain says: "Here perhaps we can best realize why beauty does not mean simply perfection. For anything perfect in every respect in its own genus—anything "totally perfect" on earth—is both totally terminated and without any lack, therefore *leaves nothing to be desired*—and therefore lacks that longing and "irritated melancholy" of which Baudelaire spoke, and which is essential to beauty here below. It is lacking a lack. A lack is lacking in any totally perfect performance (with all due respect to Toscanini). A totally perfect finite thing is untrue to the transcendental nature of beauty. And nothing is more precious than a certain sacred weakness, and that kind of imperfection through which infinity wounds the finite." This spontaneous quality of dreaming is to be found in many painters, in Chagall, in the circus improvisations of Miro, in the unfinished celebrations, the quick holidays of Dufy. There is no academic staleness, or undertaker's precision.



Many things have shaken many of us up, Stravinsky, Picasso, bombed us, maybe shaken us up into Cubism.

### *Why Cubism?*

There are as many good reasons as there are good paintings. One thing that Picasso "cubist portraits" show is that we are "all broken up." The Professor who was hit over the head by Picasso's shoe is mumbling a sentence from Cezanne which is supposed to explain the intention of Cubism: "Everything in nature is formed upon the sphere, the cone, and the cylinder. One must learn to paint these simple figures and then one can do all that he may wish." But there is *no one* Intention of Art which helps explain every particular marvel. However I think some of the best modern artists, Cezanne and Braque, in their cubist work make us more calm and contemplative. They have what Apollinaire (in his flighty praise of Braque, like a flying Eiffel Tower) calls the three "plastic virtues—purity, unity, and truth," which help "keep nature in subjection." Which reminds me of Schopenhauer.

Cezanne, in ways, like a cool vacation in the high mountains, may help lead to clarity, contemplation, detachment, to construct as one sees. The whole mountain becomes a cool thought. Braque continues this calculation in the living room with calm taste. Actually this is all very revolutionary, as Zen mysticism is, as any truly private act of being is.

Braque makes us see pears, plates, flowers, beautiful leaves, the water in a jar, the geometry of air, fish, a most harmonious woman; the woman and the happy environment are part of each other; what was a cliché now has a calm clear beauty; a musical order to all things, a happy geometry revealing pears and breasts, the subtle texture of things, the delicate pleasure of detachment, of organizing, of putting the paint on. This as we see it becomes our quiet active pleasure.

Braque: a quiet and civilized man of taste, nothing is vulgar, spectacular, sensational, official or dull; everything is quiet, varied, intimate; in a way it is very French rational (which is always a form of wit); thought is a clear and orderly pleasure when we see what he is thinking about; our moment becomes more melodious.

We shall also see Rouault. He is almost another world, part of the whirling, at times bloody, dance of Maya.

Rouault: "You think of me as a man of today. But I am not a man of today. I am a man of the time of the cathedrals." A bombed cathedral, I have to add, which is another name for modern man, though some have seemed to lose any icon of cross or truth or resurrection that was within that forever birth-into-eternity-giving Rosey Womb; many seem simply to have lost the golden icon, the very deeply buried, the very highly blessing, treasure. Rouault though his figures, though he, *is all broken up and obviously sad and bleeding*, still remembers (though sometimes it seems romantically-

nostalgically not with the memory that lifts one to Heaven)—his Hero, everyone's Man of Sorrows. That is his modern subject—the crucified hero.

Bleeding iconography: scenes of war, of miserable prostitutes, people humbly and blatantly suffering, outcasts from the circus, the freaks and the unwanted. There is a child's terror in his monumental pathos. He is in ways related to the German expressionists and Kokoschka; the cathedral window has been shattered and we bleed; they make us see the obviously horrible; they put our faces close to the massacred and feverish.

We shall see Utrillo too. And he can be most precious: his pearly and petit Montmartre—little people walking in the early morning of its coolness and beauty. There is a great purity to his work. And such sensitiveness—you feel the poet who saw it must be capable of great sadness. He has scenes too of city streets of quiet desolation. Silence. The poet or the painter looks out of his window of his dark atelier. Utrillo. Mallarme. A very delicate lyricism, they express the sadness and beauty of a luminous moment, the sensuousness of glowing.

There are many other little and perfect lyricists too—who express beautifully their mood and music; Modigliani, a sad face; a little scene. Valery. Chagall, who celebrates his own dreaminess, who finds amidst his violet thoughts and April showers weddings, floating brides, Jewish peasants, someone happy upside down, cows; in his Jewish sadness and mysticism he celebrates his kindness, gentleness, a dreamy moon, a flying rooster, a happy wife. It pleases him to paint as it pleases e.e. cummings to be dreamy, lyrical, humorous, quaint, to give us April showers of words.

Paul Eluard, the poet friend of Picasso, says one of the great forces in Picasso's work (which shows more seasons and more power than the art of Utrillo or Mallarme, these minor lyricists) is his *humanism*: "the faith man has in man." This is true. This is enormous in the bold work of Picasso. In many of the drawings there is a sense of the sun, of the Greek and mythic: satyrs, bulls, bearded gods on the beach, the ocean, beautiful naked women, really peaceful and sensuous. The human grandeur and fertility and beauty. The large woman stretched out on the beaches or the sun and sea, clarity and the easy ability of the painter, the whole beach by the sea within the woman. This is mythic. Even in the iconography of his still life work there is a moving comedy, instruments of pleasure, guitars, wine bottles, a fragment of a musical newspaper, and texture, texture, of course; he takes us in and out with the limited but very intricate playful perspective, in and out, of holes, bottles, songs, a delicate labyrinth of subtle colors; the cubistic world is sensuous and the geometry is often gay and the guitar our song.

He never stopped being blessed by Spain, Italy and France; women, the guitar, the bull, the goat, the Mediterranean.

What I have said about Picasso is only a little part of the truth. There is the fact of the painting and the mutual contemplation of you and the painting which I can say little about. There is also the tragedy of *Guernica*—the great war mural which in its grey and white and black and blank and fierce and disastrous proclamation of suffering and terror includes much of modern times and agony in any time, and Spain during the Civil War, blown up heroes, a shrieking, palpitating, bleeding electric light, the eye of tragedy in our time, Hemingway on one horn, you and me; at the moment I am not feeling so bad; it proclaims and summarizes heroically a great deal.

Rouault has *pity* for the bound and butchered Hero, a giant cut up in sorrow; but in this scene of bombardment "all things fall apart"; everything flies, dies, flies out of the picture, we fly out of the picture, but what makes this vision heroic is what the seer who makes us see it as we passionately paint together paints with utter boldness, confronting terror, throbs with bombardment; makes us see that anyone who can see and feel such a recurring event knows death and flight to the bone, to the eye, that it contains the tensions of truth in Man. Destruction. And the bold power of the creator. They clash and we are in the middle. Though we can vaguely generalize much about the vision of disaster, disorder and dissonance in Stravinsky, Faulkner, Picasso, I have to say also that Picasso (as well as Faulkner in his Nobel Prize Speech) proclaims that man's soul not only survives, it endures, it prevails. So there is tragic triumph too in the whirlwind of what some fools have referred to as Picasso's "versatile truth."

And now I hope we shall see the paintings.

Morton Seif

## An American Production

We are all children of Adam  
The rainbow man  
Who sponsors every worthy cause.  
A jingo in Rotterdam told me God spoke Dutch.

Mama is a dark maw now  
For us nephews of Achilles  
Who like Bartleby would prefer not to.  
Even girls' skirts do not entice us.

Nero is just another harmless fiend  
In the family over whom we cackle  
On visits and insights.  
The walls are tumbling down.

From there the lineage is obscured  
Like a doodled bobby pin  
Until a race of benevolent fausts  
Introduces athletics like love and war.

We have been running north since, beyond  
The limits of Endurance where most of our people are buried,  
Now it is only beginners who go on,  
Clutching undersized oversouls against the cold.

MORTON SEIF, a 1948 graduate of the University of North Carolina, has studied also at English and French universities. He has been published in Poetry, Discovery, Accent, Quarterly Review of Literature and other magazines.

## Doc's Girl

Antonia—oh, a beautiful girl, got up at seven-fifteen. Her skin, truly, was as white as the first morning cloud, the veins beneath as delicately blue as the new morning sky. Her hair was, beyond doubt, a crimson sea whose waves glistened with gold. And her eyes? Her eyes were large and round and as serenely green and blank as an endless ocean.

She went into the kitchen in her nightgown and lighted the gas under a pot of coffee. She yawned, exquisitely, stretched her long smooth body and raised one pale hand. The diamond winked hugely at her. She looked at it a moment, and then, humming aimlessly, went to the closet and chose her clothes for the day. Whiffs of coffee smell permeated the little apartment. She turned on the radio and wild tunes tumbled out. She dressed, drank her coffee, and ate the small end of a sweet roll. She put cologne behind her ears, on her wrists, combed her hair, and then, still humming, took one lazy glance around, and went out.

It was eight o'clock and still cool. Palest sunshine spotted the roadway. As she strolled to the streetcar Antonia was dappled with the vaguest light and shadow.

Antonia was the outer vestibule assistant to the business office receptionist at the Fensley & Doisy Company. She sat at a blonde desk with a pad of paper in front of her. She smiled at the salesmen and customers and listened as they talked. She said, "Please be seated," or "Go right in," or "I'm sorry, the receptionist is busy." Sometimes a customer asked, "Miss, can you tell me where this merchandise is manufactured?" Antonia would smile. "Won't you be seated," she'd say. And if they persisted she'd dial four one one and ask, "Where is the merchandise manufactured? Oh. New York," and turning, reply, "New York," and hang up.

As she sat and smiled and replied, the salesmen sat and ogled her, but she scarcely knew they were there. She gazed at and through and beyond them. She looked at the door and didn't see it. She glanced at her watch and the hour didn't register. She smiled, beautifully, at the wall, at the people, at the waste paper basket, a pale, pale young girl with crimson hair whose waves. . . .

JONELLA MAIN of New York City has had two stories listed as *Distinctive* in *Best American Short Stories*, and has been published in *Prairie Schooner*, *The Husk*, *Decade* and *Four Quarters*.

At noon she went to lunch. At one o'clock she was back at her pretty desk and she stayed there until five when she went home.

In the evenings there were many young men who took her dancing to slow tunes, who ordered gaily colored cocktails, tender squabs, pink lobsters and foamy desserts for her. Many, many young men, forever intent on kissing her good night, on holding her in their arms. But Antonia always came home early. And when the young men, as they almost always did, asked, 'May I come in for a minute?' always Antonia replied, "No." And smiled. And shut the door.

Even when she met Willard B. McKay it had been the same. Willard was a big, dark young man who was a dentist. Everybody called him 'Doc'. Antonia called him 'Willard.' Doc had seen her one Sunday afternoon in Wildstone Park. She was sitting there dangling her long white feet in the stream and blowing puffs of pale smoke from her cigarette into the empty air. The leaves moved in anxious little motions. Doc had sauntered over to her. "It's a nice day," he had remarked. "Yes," Antonia had said. Doc became one of the many young men to take her dining and dancing.

Doc had 'a way with the girls' and he was the first one to admit it. He was tan. He was muscular. He was, as he put it, the lovable type. His hair had just the right amount of curl, his brown eyes just the right amount of depth. And, he had an almost endless supply of clever things to say; subtle and esoteric witticisms, that had always left the girls floundering. To his delight. But with Antonia, it was different. No matter what he said, his remarks met with that same wide open and somewhat opaque glance. And a smile. And a detached, "Oh, Willard." He was overwhelmed. 'Here,' he thought to himself, in awe, 'is a girl who's a step ahead of me all the way.' He was fascinated. He was troubled. He was finally in love.

Late in August Doc bought the ring. He kept it at his office and looked at it every day for days, turning it this way and that to catch the light. He dreamed of Antonia, his Antonia, of white skin and winter nights and the Dentists' Convention in Chicago where everyone would turn around as they walked through the lobby of the Palmer House. . .

And then one evening when he and Antonia were dining at a secluded table at the Clifton Roof Garden, he had the ring in his pocket. The lights of the small city sparkled below them as over the wavering candlelights he looked at his delicate Antonia. He began coherently, objectively, with talk of the future, his work, his aims and ambitions, his abilities, and ended abruptly on an anguished note of, "Oh, Antonia, will you marry me?" The plea hung, isolated, in mid-air. Antonia smiled. She sipped her claret. "Why, Willard," she said.

"Then you will!"

"Oh, Willard," she said. He pulled out the ring and slipped it on her finger and kissed her. He ordered champagne, he laughed, he talked, he planned. And Antonia smiled and watched the ring sparkle.

They were married in October. It was a crisp afternoon, clear with sunlight, and two spots of gorgeous red forced their way into Antonia's pale cheeks. She walked very quietly up the flower strewn aisle to stand with the tall young man. She repeated the words after the preacher. Wisps of music, the feel of satin, and many fragrances surrounded her. She drifted back up the aisle, stood smilingly for photographs, and sank into the deep cushions of the limousine as her young man held her. She stood in the reception line and was kissed. She smiled, she replied, she thanked, and smiled and smiled.

Towards evening Doc whispered to her, "Come on, let's leave." From the fringe of her filmy white gown, from the petals of her white roses, in the gleam of shining crystal and in the hum of muted conversation and soft music Antonia turned her serenely green eyes that were blank as an endless ocean. "Yes, Willard," she said. And smiled.



*Jane Mayball*

## The Beginning Has An End

How grossly you made the translation  
between your island of loveliness  
and my ugly, ricochet salt.  
I was the brine and the terrible sea;  
you were the sun, and the monument stone.

Withdrawn, and in a way, I was always invisible  
to your calm and grazing land.  
You heard my agonized gong beat down  
on the ancient ear of a cliffside town;  
and you liked to think there was evil there.

It gave you a sense of perfection  
to feel the sea-brain as an alien thing.  
Now, I have gone in a flickering;  
whirled up in towers, by death's commotion;  
passing away to a light farewell.

But still hear the grandeur of broken rock,  
the hiss of your house, in a landfall tremble.  
I gather, as I suck my soul away,  
fragments of yourself, ground and fine,  
carried on to doom, like sparks of sand.

JANE MAYHALL, an alumna of Black Mountain College in North Carolina, has published poems in *Partisan Review*, *New World Writing*, *Western Review*, and other periodicals.

## In Review

*Jefferson: Champion of the Free Mind.*  
Phillips Russell. New York: Dodd,  
Mead & Co., 1956. 374 pp. \$6.00.

*Of men of mind American,  
Thomas Jefferson, above all,  
Gives dignity to Man,  
Who justly returns it  
(Though Jefferson needs it not  
And Man needs it desperately).*

What sort of man was Thomas Jefferson? Above all, he loved his family. He loved his beautiful Monticello and his native Virginia. He was a pre-eminent intellectual, always a willing student with a keen curiosity. Yet he enjoyed the pleasures of a lady's company. He was an idealist with a firm belief in the dignity of mankind and man's ability to govern himself. He was a "republic-man" who preferred the republican form of government to all others. He enjoyed the mysterious. He was slightly suspicious, at times believing that his letters were opened by spies. He was a man of letters who for most of his life spent half of every day keeping up with a heavy correspondence. He was not a radical. He was not a good businessman. He did not understand the relationship of economics to politics.

This is the Thomas Jefferson which emerges from the latest biography, *Jefferson: Champion of the Free Mind*, by Phillips Russell, Chapel Hill editor and retired professor of journalism.

Russell adds a human aspect, neglected until now, to Jefferson's personality. He emphasizes the women in Jefferson's life. There was Rebecca Burwell, a college love; Martha Wayles Skelton, who became Mrs. Jefferson; Maria Cosway, an Anglo-Italian artist with whom he corresponded for thirty years; Madame de Corny and Madame de Stael-Holstein, Paris intellectuals; Abigail Adams, wife of John Adams, second president of the United States;

a slave girl, Sarah (or Sally), whose child was said (by his enemies) to bear a striking resemblance to Jefferson; and Mrs. John Walker, whom a rejected office-seeker accused Jefferson of trying to seduce.

As the length of the list implies, Jefferson enjoyed a lady's company, though probably not to the extent indicated by his political enemies. Russell presents the human side of Jefferson with some emphasis but no sensationalism and the book profits by it.

Of all the women in Jefferson's life, none equal the place in his heart occupied by his two daughters, Martha and Maria. He supervised their education in detail and was never happier than when his "little family" was with him.

Jefferson was like many men when it came to paying taxes. Russell resists the insinuation that Jefferson may have cheated on his property tax. But he does point out that in the year of his election to the presidency, Jefferson paid federal taxes on his sixty-five slaves, although in Albemarle he gave the number of his slaves as ninety-three. After the subjects of women and taxes, the similarity disappears between Jefferson and most men.

Russell discounts the effect of the French Revolution on Jefferson's thought. He illustrates that many of his political ideas developed from the Anglo-Saxon common law.

Jefferson was a voluminous letter-writer. He often complained of the burden of his correspondence, especially in old age. While on a Paris walk with one of his women friends, he fell and broke his right wrist. The fracture did not heal properly and was the source of pain but Jefferson learned to write left-handed. The correspondence continued. More than twenty-seven thousand manuscripts by Jefferson's hand are known to exist today. Russell often quotes from the letters.

After he retired to Monticello, there began between Jefferson and John Adams, the two living ex-Presidents at the time, a frequent exchange of letters. Although they had been political opponents, the two men quietly wrote about questions of philosophy and politics. These letters stand as a denial of a remark by Charles A. Beard, in *The Economic Origins of Jeffersonian Democracy*, that Jefferson "accepted the Federalist principle and practice of distrusting the intelligence and character of the section of the people that was opposed to him."

A passage by Adams shows the old Federalist had an acute sense of history. He wrote to Jefferson:

"Your character in history may easily be foreseen. Your administration will be quoted by philosophers as a model of profound wisdom; by politicians as weak, superficial and shortsighted. Mine, like Pope's woman, will have no character at all."

Jefferson's conviction of man's ability to govern himself contained one reservation. He always added that man must be informed. By this he did not mean informed in current affairs, for he once said he would rather know what happened three hundred years in the past than be abreast of daily happenings. By information he meant education and throughout his life he promoted education for the masses, a move which culminated in the founding of the University of Virginia.

Jefferson enjoyed mystery. In writing about his college sweetheart he used fictitious names and sometimes substituted misleading pronouns. While ambassador to France and Secretary of State, he thought his letters were opened and read by British and French spies. Even as President he referred to the Rogers and Clark Expedition (in private letters) as a "literary journey."

The reader comes away from Russell's book with a feeling for the romance of life among the Virginia aristocrats of the period. Monticello was gay. Important visitors arrived and departed con-

stantly. The dinner table was heaped with choice food and wine.

Russell's style is direct and pleasant. He uses words with understanding and economy. He is at his best when describing Jefferson's attitude toward his daughters, no coincidence since Russell also is the father of two daughters.

The book is illustrated with 36 photographs, some of the subjects barely mentioned in the text. A photograph of a painting by John Trumbull for Maria Cosway, showing Jefferson in Parisian dress, is published for the first time.

Robert T. Pittman

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*Thomas Hardy and the Cosmic Mind.*

J. O. Bailey. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

At the time *The Dynasts* was being published, Part I 1904, Part II 1906, Part III 1908, the currents of Nineteenth Century philosophy and science influenced literary men to construct their works around vaguely conceived theories. We immediately think of Shaw's Fabianism and the debate in *Man and Superman*, Norris' reading of Spencer, and the influence of Haeckel upon Dreiser. The outcry against Hardy's vigorous application of Schopenhauer's pessimism and determinism to the theme of *Jude the Obscure* turned Hardy from the novel to poetry. In the process a strange mutation occurred. Pessimism had been ameliorated to a modified meliorism. *The Dynasts* ends with a paean of qualified hope that the universe may eventually come to conscious recognition of compassion. The epic was conceived by Hardy as a cosmic drama which included the entire universe, both organic and inorganic, in a vast inter-related action. Although the drama was not intended by Hardy as an exposition of a philosophic system;

a definite cosmology, epistemology, and ontology are implied throughout.

*The Dynasts* is a very serious attempt to integrate currents of thought which had run through the Nineteenth Century: scientific rationalism with philosophic idealism, Mill's rationalistic essay on nature with Schopenhauer's purely idealistic *World as Will and Idea*. The drama also takes its place in the parade of Nineteenth Century epics such as *The Idylls of the King* and *The Ring and the Book*. These ideas are realized and developed in an action which takes place on three levels. Underlying the universe is the Cosmic Mind, which is conceived as an unconscious cosmic force. At one point the veil is lifted from the illusory world and the inner workings of the Cosmic Will are revealed as a huge mind whose parts are animate and inanimate life. The second level of action develops in the debate between the Spirits of the Years, the Spirits Sinister, Irony and of the Pities, which are conceived as symbols of the Will's manifestations and channels of causation. They take the place of the classic chorus and are also symbols of cosmic attributes. The third level of action is the human conflict during the Napoleonic Wars, including its vast panorama of action with special attention to the career of Napoleon.

Dr. Bailey addresses his book to inconsistencies in the interpretation of the poem. Many of the critics have hastily carried over the thought evident in the novels to the poems and *The Dynasts*. Specifically, Hardy's epic poem has been interpreted as an exposition of Schopenhauer's doctrines of pessimism and determinism. The Immanent Will in such a system could only be groundless, indifferent and self-destructive. The meliorism at the end was merely a vague wish on Hardy's part and an inconsistency in the iron-bound determinism of the play. Yet Hardy was very insistent on the rational validity of his ending. The Spirits have also been misinterpreted, many commentators regarding them merely as clumsy substitutes for the old classical

machinery. The Spirit of the Pities has been especially misunderstood. Where could such a spirit fit in the determined, pessimistic world of Schopenhauer? Many of these critics have failed to recognize a progress in Hardy's thought, although the evidence of the later poems had clearly indicated that Hardy no longer believed that crass causality ruled the universe. They repeated the clichés about Hardy's work, making applications to *The Dynasts* which were not adequate.

In brief, Dr. Bailey's thesis may be concisely summarized: Hardy was positing a serious theory of evolutionary meliorism, influenced by Van Hartman's idealistic and melioristic *Theory of the Unconscious* which mitigated Schopenhauer's excessive pessimism. Dr. Bailey states:

Writing to express a scientifically informed, modern view of the world, Hardy wrote to express his feelings as a man and a poet. His feelings—his compassion, even his yearning for religion—qualify his intellectual position in important ways. His medium of poetic drama allowed him to use Spirits as spectators, interpreters of the action, and impersonated points of view. The Spirits also take part in the dramatic action as 'sources or channels of Causation.' (p. 32)

In apposition to scientific determinism, Hardy also perceived psychic phenomena and pity operating in the universe. The psychic phenomena were manifestations of the Will, either stimulated by the Spirits or directly sent out from the Will. Dr. Bailey also proves that the Spirits have a much more serious part in the drama as channels of Causation, commentators, and cosmic debaters. The Spirit of the Pities is the product of human suffering and compassion which stands in opposition to the stoical Spirit of the Years, the rationalistic and mocking Irony, and the evil Sinister (Hardy mitigated the Spirit Sinister to an insignificant part because he saw that the Will is indiffer-

ent and incapable of evil, a standard idealistic belief). A cosmic debate continues through the drama with the Spirit of the Pities gaining prestige until the others are forced to admit that suffering cannot go on forever; that the spectacle of the Napoleonic Wars is a horrid mistake; that although consciousness is a mistake in evolution with its concomitant of pain and suffering, the Will through human consciousness will become aware and then pity and compassion will pervade the universe instead of crass causality. Dr. Bailey characterizes the Will as Cosmic Mind, being one and unconscious. The Will has five characteristics: it is unconscious and inbrooding; it is aimless, spinning a dream which has an unconscious but definite end; it is above space and time being infinite; it is one, a manipulator of all life, both organic and inorganic; and it is gaining consciousness through suffering and pity.

Although Hardy had arrived at a vague melioristic theory by 1893, after reading Van Hartman, he found these ideas set in a significant pattern. Dr. Bailey uses both Van Hartman and Hardy's interest in psychic phenomena as the implements to fashion a new theory of the meaning and purpose of *The Dynasts*. He accomplishes his purpose—a new reading of the poem. He applies Van Hartman's *Theory of the Unconscious* to the entire poem in order to explain other cruxes in its interpretation, besides the evolutionary meliorism at the end. Other critics have tended to simplify most of them, merely carrying over the philosophy of the novels to the drama. In this book, previous critical work is intelligently integrated with the author's thesis. Dr. Bailey addresses himself to the weaknesses in the philosophical interpretations of the poem, demonstrates that they were not weaknesses at all, and proves his thesis by looking at the poem from a new point of view.

The few weaknesses in the book are the result of a too conscious desire to make the thesis clear. If the overall structure is clear and tight, and Dr.

Bailey's clear, lucid style is a great asset in the exposition of the topic, he is often repetitious and at two or three points appears to argue in a circle. At times he argues his point too much, i.e., he applies the Van Hartman thesis where a more simple explanation might do and he can labor a point. But above all, the thesis is clear and well documented. The poem is given a significant new reading.

*The Dynasts* does deserve a rereading at the present time. If the bulk puts off the reader, the reward of catching the reflection from the mirror which Hardy holds up to nature, showing it in all its colors and depth, is rewarding and significant. The literary-philosophic problem of the first decade of the century, as conceived by Hardy, still has great relevance to the mid-century. His tentative solution of evolutionary meliorism still may have some application. *Thomas Hardy and the Cosmic Mind* is an intelligent reading of the poem which may help to interpret the book in modern terms for an audience leery of reading a long philosophical poem.

G. A. Santangelo

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*Tarheel Talk: An Historical Study of the English Language in North Carolina to 1860:* Norman E. Eliason. Chapel Hill; The University of North Carolina Press, 1956. \$5.00.

Now that Professor Eliason's *Tarheel Talk* has been around for a few months, it is easier for us to think of the book as a fact; at first, like all new books, it was an event. The book is a pleasant fact to contemplate. It is written in a style that is suited to its matter; it is painstakingly accurate in detail; and while it makes no claim to being exhaustive, it has enough substance to be a rewarding experience to the reader with even a slight interest in the historical development of the English language in North Carolina.

The rewards of reading this book should be especially great for the person who has, all along, had a healthy

interest in the speech habits of North Carolinians but who, for whatever reason, has depended for knowledge on those ever-ready "Sunday supplement linguists" who emphasize the curious and bizarre aspects of local dialects. For if Professor Eliason's book accomplishes anything at all—and I think it accomplishes a great deal—it effectively orients the speech of North Carolina to the development of the English language as a whole. Thus one who reads *Tarheel Talk* learns little if anything that is merely quaint or eccentric; he learns instead many things that shed light on the language in North Carolina today and on the English language in neighboring states as well. It is this fact, that our ways of talking are so nearly like those of our neighbors, that makes the study of North Carolina speech worthwhile. And it is Professor Eliason's seeing and expressing this fact with clarity that gives his book much of its value.

*Tarheel Talk* grew out of several years of study by the author in the Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina. The unpublished material in the Collection is a mine of linguistic data; without it this book would have been quite impossible. Even as material in the Southern Historical Collection made the book possible, however, it also imposed limits on the author. For, as an honest linguist, Professor Eliason makes nothing up; thus the common eastern North Carolina pronunciation of "was not/were not" is not mentioned in the book since it was not attested in the papers from which the author gathered his material.

As far as the contents of *Tarheel Talk* are concerned, I suspect that the general reader—and it is he that the author is trying to reach—will find some parts of the book considerably harder going than others. Especially is the chapter on pronunciation (Chapter V) likely to slow the layman's progress. It is not that the author is obscure in this chapter; it is simply that his subject is quite technical. Mr. Eliason has done bravely and well here, and else-

where, with a minimum of technical vocabulary and special symbol, but the intelligent reader will be well advised to keep in mind that now and again he must read this book thoughtfully or even studiously. To the careful reader's encouragement, it should be said that his labor will not go unpaid.

J. R. Gaskin

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*George Bernard Shaw: Man of the Century*: Archibald Henderson. New York: Appleton Century Crofts, 1956: \$12.00.

In Chicago 54 years ago, a young Tarheel with a fresh Ph.D. in mathematics was persuaded to forego for an evening his researches on the "Twenty-seven Lines upon the Cubic Surface" to attend a performance of *You Never Can Tell*, by a playwright he had never heard of: George Bernard Shaw. "I sat through that performance," he says, ". . . feeling as if I were being subjected to some sort of mental electrification. . . . I emerged from the theatre a changed man. I had discovered a genius." Thus Archibald Henderson crossed "the threshold of the greatest intellectual. . . . and spiritual adventure" of his life, an adventure that has involved the writing, as Shaw's authorized biographer, of three extensive biographies, five other volumes in which Shaw figures prominently and more than a hundred articles in half a dozen languages—the whole constituting one of the most detailed studies ever made of any man by a single author. His latest biography, *George Bernard Shaw: Man of the Century*, published at the end of Shaw's centennial year (1956), presents, in nearly a thousand pages, the culmination of that "adventure." The result—however one may differ with his estimate of Shaw as the "man of the century" or with his critical interpretations—is the most informative book ever written about Shaw, and one that is indispensable for any serious student of modern drama.

In his latest biography, Dr. Henderson's emphasis is primarily on Shaw as a dedicated artist and reformer—as it



was in his pioneering study, *George Bernard Shaw: His Life and Works* (1911). The tendency to concentrate unduly on the witty, egotistic, clowning side of Shaw, which marred the otherwise admirable *Playboy and Prophet* (1932), is largely avoided. In *Man of the Century*, Dr. Henderson views Shaw's "whole life" as "a New Pilgrim's Progress in search of a new Celestial City." Here is the story not merely of the fabulous G. B. S. who titillated the "wicked" and shocked the "righteous" for some seventy years—leading such respectable Englishmen as Henry Arthur Jones to call for the purging of this "despiser, distorter, and denier of the plain truths whereby men live"—but of the dedicated artist in the Slough of Despond who kept on writing his "five pages a day" despite years of unbroken failure. The motive power that kept him going was his Puritan conviction that he had a mission. This sense of mission shaped his attitude towards art—"All great art is propaganda"—and underlay many of his other activities:

Whenever he received an invitation for a lecture [on socialism], he gave the applicant the first date he had vacant, whether it was for a street corner, a chapel, or a drawing room. He spoke to audiences of every description, from University dons to London washerwomen. From 1883 to 1895, with virtually no exception, he delivered a harangue, with debate, questions, and so on, every Sunday—sometimes twice or even thrice—and on a good many weekdays.

Meanwhile, he learned how to get his ideas before the public:

In order to get a hearing, it was necessary to attain the footing of a privileged lunatic, with the license of a jester. . . . My method is to take the utmost trouble to find the right thing to say, and then say it with the utmost levity. And all the time the real joke is that I am in earnest. "Every jest," said Father Keegan, "is

an earnest in the womb of time." Eventually the womb of time brought forth fame for Shaw in many fields: as music and drama critic, lecturer, economist, political pamphleteer, correspondent, director, and author of some 54 plays. But, as Dr. Henderson shows, the pilgrimage was not an easy one: even those plays which were later to win world-wide acclaim were failures, though noisy ones, when first produced in London. The attitude of actors, critics, and public alike was reflected in Richard Mansfield's rejection of *Candida* in 1895: "Your play . . . is lacking in all the essential qualities. The stage is not for sermons." Twenty-five years after he began writing, and 12 after his initial play was produced, he scored his first real success in London—in 1904, when the Royal Court Theatre produced five of his plays before enthusiastic audiences.

Perhaps unavoidably, there is some duplication in *Man of the Century* of earlier material: for example, chapters XVII-XXI of *Playboy and Prophet*—dealing with Shaw's early socialist activities—appear virtually unchanged as chapters 16-17, and many other sections of the earlier volume have been transposed into new chapters. In general, these shifts result in a more effective organization.

There is a great deal of new material, much of it invaluable for the student of Shaw or of those great movements in which he took an important part. The section on socialism is considerably expanded and includes a significant selection of Shaw's letters to the Webbs, which amply support Dr. Henderson's contention that Shaw, far from being a mere "voice" for their ideas, was the most important figure in the far-reaching Fabian movement. The "beautiful, memorable" Shaw-Terry correspondence, in which, as Dr. Henderson says, "we clearly discern the knight errant seeking to rescue the imprisoned, enchanted damsel from the ogre's [Henry Irving's] castle," is dealt with more amply and appreciatively than before. The letters exchanged with Mrs. Pat



Campbell—that "Monster of illiteracy," as Shaw called her—are also given their due. The plays written since 1932 are analyzed, in some instances somewhat cavalierly, in the new work. Perhaps the most interesting new material is found in the discussion of influences. Dr. Henderson now views the plays—which Shaw indiscriminately referred to as allegories, parables, and fables—as strongly influenced by the old Moralities and by the puppet and marionette shows that Shaw admired. His evidence for the direct influence of the puppet shows is more convincing than that for the Morality plays. In my opinion, Shaw's dramas are much closer in spirit and form to Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* than to *The Castle of Perseverance* or *Everyman*. Without developing the point, Dr. Henderson implies as much when he says: "Every Shaw play is a new century *Pilgrim's Progress*, an epiphany of the great human army of individual pioneers and social engineers, striving ever onward and upward toward a new social Utopia and a future cosmic dream." The chapter entitled "Major Influences: Bunyan, Dickens, Moliere," which includes new and helpful material on the relation of Shaw to Moliere and Dickens, also contains a new recognition of Bunyan's transcending influence:

In all probability, Shaw as thinker, reformer, meliorist was more continuously and profoundly influenced by Bunyan than by any other author: Shakespeare, Moliere, Goethe, Swift, Ibsen, Tolstoy, Butler, Blake. His "earliest sensations" are remembered by him in association with *The Pilgrim's Progress*; in maturer years, with extravagant enthusiasm, he designates Bunyan "our greatest English dramatizer of life"; and names him first among the four great artist-philosophers, Bunyan, Blake, Hogarth, and Turner, "whose peculiar sense of the world I recognize as more or less akin to my own."

Among the other new material is a valuable appendix prepared by Dean

Lucille Kelling, of the School of Library Science at the University of North Carolina, which lists performances of Shaw's plays throughout the world. Dean Kelling concludes that Shaw's dramas

will live as long as "little theatres" persist because so many of his plays are repertory plays. They seem to have a surprising universality both in time and place: some of them have been played for more than fifty years in dozens of countries widely divergent in language and customs.

Dr. Henderson's critical analyses of the plays are invariably stimulating though, perhaps for reasons of space, somewhat sketchy. My chief complaint is against his failure to acknowledge adequately the paramount role of Shaw's religion of Creative Evolution. The chapter titled "The Life Force" skirts the edges of Shaw's religion without ever getting at the core, and the final comments in "The End of the Beginning" seem to confuse Creative Evolution with asceticism. As a dramatist Shaw regarded himself as "the iconographer of the religion of my time," and he made it clear that the religion he meant was Creative Evolution, which binds together systematically most of what he thought and wrote. Dr. Henderson's conclusion is that "Shaw remains the High Priest of a religion to which he has made no converts," but he concedes the lasting elements in Shaw's themes which are common to all religions. "Shaw," he adds, "was engaged in the greatest business to which man can set his hands: to further the purpose of God in the world."

Like Shaw, Archibald Henderson seems to be several men in one: teacher, mathematician, interpreter of Einstein, historian, critic, and biographer of Mark Twain and Bernard Shaw. In all these fields, he has achieved eminence. In his biographies of Shaw—if his speculation that Shaw will live proves correct—he has achieved immortality.

William F. Goodykoontz

Clarice Short

## In The Alfalfa

In the alfalfa it is the day of doom  
With no more trump of warning than the chirr  
Of meadowlark surprised by the clamorous blade.  
The weightless ones like butterflies and bees,  
Never of tragic stature, flutter off.  
But porcupines and rabbits, Oedipus-like,  
That have sinned seriously without their knowing  
Are punished beyond their sinning and struck down.  
Even the serpent coiled among the stems  
Goes not unmarked although he lie clod still;  
He and the innocent nest fare equally  
When all the lush green fastnesses of life  
Are bared to Apollonian death and light.

CLARICE SHORT, of Salt Lake City, teaches English at the University of Utah.



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by Cherry Parker (U.N.C. '58),  
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by Judith Groch,  
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"The Bitter Man,"  
by Robert Robinson (U.N.C. '59),  
Georgetown, Del.

"For We Have Gained This Day,"  
by William Starrs,  
Chapel Hill, N. C.

"Whistle," by D. H. Bankson, Moscow, Idaho

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and in acknowledging the general high quality of the contest entries.

Paul Green

## Interpreting America

(Conversation on a Train)

Some years ago I struck up a passing acquaintance with a contracting engineer on a train—a man of very definite opinion. We were sitting on the rear platform of the lounge car as we rode through the mountains of Pennsylvania. He was talking about this vast country of ours.

"Why don't the writing folks, the literary fellows, really try to interpret America?" he said. "When I was younger I loved to read modern novels, I loved to go to the theatre, but after getting out into the world and helping build such things as these great steel bridges we've been crossing or that hydro-electric plant we passed a few minutes back, I began to lose interest in most of the printed stuff as well as what I saw on the stage. And the movies don't seem to be any better either. Of course I like to go to a movie now and then, or a light musical comedy. But they mean nothing." And he waved his hand dismissively. "The movies are getting harder to take all the time anyway. Hollywood seems to be mainly concerned these days with stories of spies and gangsters, of killings and violence and cheap sex for its bill of fare. And the actors and actresses themselves don't behave normally any more. Take the way they make love on the screen—hardly decent in the close-ups. More of bitings and gnawings than kisses of true affection. Disgusting."

"Well —"

"And there is always this he-man fisticuffing going on and the jerking out of pistols either to shoot somebody in the belly or to crack a skull. And when the movies are not doing that they're all the time chasing a covey of poor old Indians over the plains and murdering them. Now what sort of way is that to interpret America, I ask you, interpret it to our young people and our older ones too for that matter, and to the world at large? A fellow who'd traveled in Asia a lot told me recently that the Hollywood movies are doing more harm to our international relationships than all the blunders of the politicians in Washington. There are exceptions now and then of course—as in the work of Charlie Chaplin, and Walt Disney. And sometimes there's a healthy piece like the ones Will Rogers used to do. But as I say, they are all exceptions. Wonder to me the whole country's not filled with juvenile delinquents, and from what I read in the papers sometimes I think it is.

"Take this train we are riding on, for instance," he continued. "Here's one of the marvels of power and efficiency in the modern world. And those

*At the recent national speech and drama convention in Chicago the American Educational Theatre Association announced its recognition of PAUL GREEN as the nation's leading regional playwright and the observance of 1957 as the "Paul Green Year."*

bridges I mentioned and the tunnels and the great skyscrapers and the stretching highways—the wide fields and farms, the harvests of grain and corn in the Middle West, the tremendous irrigation projects in the Southwest, the Roosevelt and Hoover dams—think of them. What an inspiring thing the Empire State Building is too; And Rockefeller Center! My business is as a builder—the making of such things—and yet I never get used to the wonder of them. The other day I was standing in Radio City. I looked up the corner of a structure shouldering its way some nine hundred feet in the air, its top hidden in the foggy clouds. Lord, it looked like it would lean over and crush me. Made me feel like taking off my hat and being humble before it and singing praises to the men who made it. And there I could put my hand on the jointure of the mortar and brick and steel, the true straight mark of the trowel on the cement of the unknown builder who had helped raise this mighty thing.”

“Maybe you ought to write—write plays and books yourself,” I said.

“Oh no, not me.”

“You’ve got the words all right.”

“I don’t know about that, but I do know that most of the modern books I’ve read and the plays I’ve seen on the stage and screen seem mighty poor stuff compared to the actual things I’ve experienced—no lift to them, no spring and no bounce. And, brother, this country’s got plenty of lift, plenty of bounce.”

“That’s right,” I said. “I wish it were different.”

“And it could be different,” he went on, “if the fellows that write and paint and compose our music and do what they call dabble in the arts knew and felt what this country is. Most of them stay shut up in a room or congregate around Times Square, or hang about at Hollywood cocktail parties where everybody’s messing with somebody else’s wife. And they don’t know anything. They are ignorant, that’s what.”

“But a few of our writers have done some mighty fine things.”

“Maybe so—away back yonder, no doubt—fellows like Emerson, Longfellow, Hawthorne, Whitman and Mark Twain. ‘Course I could never get fired up over that Hawthorne—he was always too slow. I’ll never forget how bored I was with that *House of Seven Gables*. I had to read in high school. But still I got something from it—something about man and his duty, about what a fellow ought to do and feel in his heart—about his duty to God even. But you don’t hear much about duty and responsibility any more. Nor about sin, that good old word we used to use. They’ve all gone out of fashion in favor of psychiatry and sick souls—though they don’t use the word soul any more, except in the church, and nobody pays much attention to the preachers. Recently I tried to read a piece—rather my wife read it to me—full of rats and death and bones and dying again—some sort of title about the Wasteland. Couldn’t make a thing out of it.”

“The rattle of the bones and chuckles spread from ear to ear—a rat crept through the vegetation—dragging his slimy belly on the bank—a current undersea picked his bones in whispers.”

“Is that from the poem?”

"Yes."

"You know it by heart?"

"Some of it."

"You might have spent your time better learning something else."

"Like what?"

"Well—like the one me and my wife learned together once—'Grow old along with me, the best is yet to be.'"

"*Rabbi Ben Ezra*. I once learned to recite it too."

"And then it goes on to say something about 'the last of life for which the first was made.'"

"Yes, Browning was a great optimist," I said.

"Well, what's wrong with being an optimist? He had love and he had faith too. This fellow of the *Wasteland* was all the time discouraged. As I say, I didn't understand what he was writing about, but I got enough of it to see that he didn't think being born into this world was worth a hoot. I happen to think it is."

"So do I. But then T. S. Eliot was interpreting the age."

"What age? Not me, anyhow. And it's not only the writing fellows and the poets and the motion picture guys and the playwrights. It's our musicians too—I mentioned them. They swing around, jazz up their stuff, pour out ungodly discords, bang on their drums and tin pans, act important like all get-out, same as if they were offering up Beethoven or Brahms. And it's all sound and fury."

"You're really down on things," I said.

"Danged tooting, such things as these," he said. "Take this modern art—it's just as bad off as any of it. I've seen some of it in the exhibition halls and museums—smeary daubs and weird wild things like what a child might make in a tantrum with paint on its fingers—the sort of thing you'd expect from people in asylums maybe with their moonlit eyes. Yes sir, I like the good old paintings, the good portraits and landscapes, things you can look at and understand—religious paintings like Raphael and Rembrandt and landscapes like Winslow Homer. And then in sculpture—fellows like St. Gaudens. Did you ever see that thing he did in Rock Creek Cemetery there in Washington?"

"Yes," I said, "the monument to the wife of Henry Adams. It's wonderful."

"Wonderful is right," he answered. "A figure of grief it is. But you notice her chin is lifted, her head unbowed no matter what suffering and sorrow she has been through. There's no whining and complaining in her. She is saying her say, singing her song right on to the end. Yes."

"Well, how would you go about getting the kind of writing and the music and painting you describe?" I queried.

"Lord, I don't know," he said, throwing away the stub of his cigar and rising. "That up to all you fellows."

He started back into the train, then turned and sat energetically down again. "Yes, I do know how," he said. "Let the authors and artists and composers get down and study and learn what this country is about just the

way we engineers and builders have to study and learn what we are dealing with. And if they did that they'd appreciate it, they'd be inspired by it, yes-siree. They couldn't help it. Instead of so many of 'em sitting around and trying to read wisdom into their umbilical buttons or pour out the complaints of their sick and feeble souls, let them lift up their heads and look out before them, look out and around and back down the long reach of our history, say. We've had plenty of great events happening in this country. And great people too. Why don't they write about them for a change?"

"Last winter my wife and I decided we'd try the New York theatre again. So we went up to the big city to see a few plays. We had a week and we were going to enjoy ourselves even at five dollars a ticket. But seemed like every play we saw had to do with some sort of human rot and decay or degradation—yes, had to do with some poor weakling or other who was sitting about moaning over the failure of his life, sitting on a sofa or gazing out through the window and sounding off his complaint that the world had gypped him. One fellow, for instance, had learned finally that all through his boyhood days he had hated his father and he hadn't known it but that was the reason he had been frustrated so long and hadn't amounted to anything. Of course you ask yourself, that now he'd found out what the trouble was, why didn't he go on and get to work and quit sitting around rehashing the whole thing. And then in other pieces there was a lot of talk about this man Freud and the darker insides of a person that carry him helpless down to perdition. And of course insanity was a big subject too, all mixed in with a good sprinkling of perversion and filth and that sort of stuff. We saw two plays dealing with these subjects—no, one and a half, for we didn't sit through the last one. The young men in those two plays with their pajamas and their perfume and their quick excited gestures and high voices were really tangled up with one another's souls—or insides or whatever you call it. I don't know how the second play ended, but along toward the end of the first one one of them sick young fellows sat down and wrote a long note of explanation to the world, then went in the bathroom and shot himself through the head. I said to myself, that's a good ride-dance, but I still asked myself what good did that do him or anybody else?"

"What play was that?" I asked. "I don't remember it."

"Well, maybe I exaggerated some, but that's the way I remember it."

"I see you're looking for a play or a work of art to do you some good."

"Of course I am. A man would be a fool to go hunting for something to do him harm. Anyway, I know that what those two young fellows needed was to be run out of their apartment—an apartment maybe which their hard-working parents somewhere, maybe down there in your North Carolina, were sending them money to pay for while they got started in their careers on the stage or found themselves. Yes, sir, they should have been run out of there and put back into the fields hoeing tobacco and corn or set to swinging an axe cutting cordwood back home."

"And then there was another play about a young girl who was restless and dissatisfied and got to committing sin with a lot of young bucks in the neighborhood. Now, notice of course she never spoke of its being a sin."

She was restless and dissatisfied and was looking for self-fulfillment, she said. And I might say here that sometimes that's a good way for a girl to get self-fulfillment and exactly in the manner you might expect—if she's not careful. Well, she had a flood of fine pretty phrases to explain her behavior, and as I say, sinfulness was not one of them. The fellow that wrote it could really handle the words all right, but the words didn't get anywhere even after two hours, except to show her becoming more unhappy and restless all the time. Finally she got herself raped good and thorough by her sister's husband to see what that would do for her. But that didn't seem to help her either, and finally the doctor came and said she was crazy and they'd have to shut her up. So they hauled her off to the asylum and the curtain came down and there was loud applause and all around me were a lot of women sniffing in their handkerchiefs and furs and scrubbing the tears out of their eyes. I felt like standing up and saying—What that woman needs is a good hard spanking on her hot behind. And she ought to be put to work scrubbing floors or waiting on tables or doing something to make an honest living—that's what I felt like saying.

"Well, I could go on and tell you more of this same sort of thing, but my wife and I had had enough and so we turned in the rest of our five and six dollar tickets and took the train back home to get cleaned off. Now you tell me," he drove on belligerently, "why our authors can't write about better things than these? Why don't they write about what I was talking of awhile ago? Write about the men who made this country, for instance—who really went up against things, men who fought their way on through and won—though plenty of them lost their lives in the struggle—the fellows that first started this country. They were men—they had a man's job to do. Yes sir, their story was a story of hardship, of flesh against stone, of steel against wood, of sweat, of heartache, of backache and all the pains and troubles of striving men conquering this great wilderness here. And they got defeated again and again. But finally they had won their precarious and shaky foothold on the fringes of this eastern shore of America. Then they beat their way inland up into the hills, into the mountains, over the mountains—mountains that I've helped tunnel through—across the rivers and plains to still other mountains and another ocean three thousand miles away. They were tough men and they were men with a vision too with their eyes lifted, their foreheads up in the light. They are worth writing about. And then the men that followed these first pioneers! Why don't the fellows write about George Washington, for instance—about Jefferson, Franklin, Madison, Patrick Henry and Hamilton and the great work they did? And then there was Abraham Lincoln too and Teddy Roosevelt and more lately Woodrow Wilson. Now Woodrow Wilson tried one of the hardest jobs any man ever tackled—he tried to get the nations of the world to live in peace rather than cut one another's throats all the time as they had been doing throughout history. He's a big subject for any writer, any artist, any composer. And then we've got a lot of folklore and legends, folk tales, folk heroes and ballads to write about and use—such fellows as Davy Crockett and Paul Bunyan and the muscle man John Henry that hammered in the mountain



till his hammer caught on fire. And then our inventors and our builders—Eli Whitney, Robert Fulton and the greatest of them all, Thomas A. Edison. Here is plenty of material, plenty of subject matter to last these authors a long time if they'd only see it."

"But you wouldn't want to limit writers and composers, would you—prescribe what they should write about? You wouldn't want them to write about America all the time?"

"Of course I wouldn't. But what I'm saying is they're neglecting the very best subjects of all and choosing, it seems to me, about the worst. And why should people want to celebrate and concern themselves all the time with the sicknesses and weaknesses? Why not sing about, talk about, man's strength sometimes? What people need, it seems to me, is encouragement rather than discouragement. Take yourself—what do you write about?"

"Mostly Negroes and Southern white people—"

"Poor whites!"

"I guess so. Tenant farmers pretty much."

"Uhm." He grimaced and lit another cigar. "And with a lot of sex and violence in it?"

"A lot of violence anyway, I'm afraid."

"Killings and lynchings and Ku Klux and that sort of thing?"

"Yes. You see, you have to have a lot of activity, violence even, in order to have drama."

"Seems to me you could have plenty of drama in taking a worthwhile man who's got a hard job to do and seeing how he does it."

"In the main I agree with you," I said. "The truth is we writing fellows haven't measured up to our job, I guess. But recently I tried something like what you've been talking about."

"Well, good then."

"A play dealing with some of the early history of our country."

"All right, tell me about it."

"It has to do with Sir Walter Raleigh's attempts to make a settlement on Roanoke Island in North Carolina back in the sixteenth century."

"Roanoke Island? That was where Virginia Dare was born, wasn't it, the first English child born in the new world? I studied it in my school history as a boy. That Sir Walter Raleigh was a man that really put out. He was right in there pitching to the end."

"Yes, he was, though all his efforts ended in failure and he lost his head to boot."

"So he lost it. But he lost it in a good cause."

"His colony of men, women and children he sent over to Roanoke Island disappeared from the face of the earth. The play is about that Lost Colony. We have produced it in an amphitheatre which we built on the island right where the colony lived."

"And how did the public like your play?"

"The people seemed to like it all right. We had big crowds that came from everywhere. We plan to run it summer after summer."

"And I reckon you showed how those settlers struggled, didn't you,

how they kept on trying to make a go of things, didn't you?"

"Yes I did. There was some of the moaning and bellyaching you spoke about in it. But the main characters were tough. They were fighters. They didn't quit. They wouldn't give up. They kept right on."

"That's the way to do it."

"They suffered hunger and death and cold and disease but they wouldn't call for the calf rope."

"Calf rope is good."

"Finally they marched away into the wilderness hunting a better home and were never heard of again. But in the play I tried to show that the example of their struggle, their sacrifice, their endeavor to stand up under adversity were worth remembering. Their story is part of our heritage."

"Sounds interesting. Maybe I'll get my wife and come down and see it next summer."

"I wish you would. I'm writing another one now to be produced in an amphitheatre we're building at Williamsburg, Virginia. It's a play about Thomas Jefferson and all the hard work he put out along with George Washington, Patrick Henry and others to get our government started back in the eighteenth century."

"Sounds good. I hope you'll keep on and write more like them. I bet you they'll be successful."

"I expect to. But there are a lot of drawbacks to this kind of drama. You see, a play in the outdoors is different from one indoors. For one thing there's not much time for characterization. There's not much time to establish mood, atmosphere and environmental background. And in order to keep a big crowd interested, overcome the crying of children and the noise of the outdoors around, things have to move in a hurry. There has to be color, pageantry, a lot of crowd action, battle scenes even."

"Well, why not? That's all a part of our life. That's healthy. It's strong and human."

"I've invented a name for this type of play," I continued. I was now just as full of my part of the subject as he had been of his. "I call it symphonic drama."

"Do you use a symphony orchestra in it?"

"No, not a symphony. I mean that I try to use all the arts of the theatre working together, sounding together in the Greek meaning of the term symphony. The words of the story line itself of course are the main part of the play. But I add to it and intensify it as I can with other elements of theatre art—music, pantomime, dancing, folk songs and hymns when needed, dream sequences, masks, amplification, mental speech, sound-track effects, mechanical projection devices even—whatever is needed to drive the story on to its fulfillment. I think it is possible that this sort of historical drama may spread—if we can get one or two more plays established at important historical shrines like Valley Forge, Plymouth Rock or Gettysburg. And later these dramas won't have to be limited to historical subjects alone. Any subject matter out of the life of our people will be good if it is dramatic, at least I think it will. Our tradition is rich and varied. We are a nation of boundless

enthusiasm and good health, of muscle power and the outdoors—just as you say. Our hearts and bodies are full of singing and dancing and poetry too, plenty of it. We can use all that in these plays. Yes sir, as a people our faces are lifted, our hands are eager and our feet are marching on. The outpourings of our American life are too rich and creative to find complete dramatic expression in the narrow and killingly expensive confines of any professional theatre be it on Broadway or in any other metropolitan center. I agree with you in that. But as I say —

"No buts, brother, you're talking my language."

"Well, I hope the Williamsburg play I am writing will be as much a success as *The Lost Colony*—yes, more so. If it is I'll feel that something of my point is proved—your point, too."

"Right."

"For every nation, it seems to me," I hurried on, "is engaged in the process of building a civilization or not. And just as with Greece no nation is any greater than the heroes it honors and believes in. So I guess in this symphonic outdoor drama I am engaged in the business of trying to help establish worthwhile heroes."

"And it's worthwhile work," he affirmed heartily.

"I call this play I'm working on now *The Common Glory*."

"Sounds like a good title."

"I got it from a speech made by the fiery old radical, Sam Adams, up in Boston back in Revolutionary times. To me it means there is a common glory in our American way of life, to be earned and shared by all of us, high and low, as we work to make our democratic ideal prevail. I try to show that in the play. Then another outdoor drama I want to write has to do with the first permanent settlement at Jamestown in Virginia. There were some great and heroic doings on that little island back in the early sixteen-hundreds."

"Yeah, there were that. I remember the Starving Time from my school books. And Pocahontas and John Smith."

"And John Rolfe, don't forget him—the fellow that taught the doctrine of hard work with your hands, growing things out of the earth. He believed that was the way to build a nation."

"Yeh, I remember him and his tobacco."

"But as I say, there are a lot of drawbacks to this sort of drama. There are a lot of difficulties, problems to be solved, and I haven't yet solved them."

"Well, what of it? A difficulty, a problem is a kind of opportunity, I should say. It is in my work."

"No doubt it is. But I don't agree with all you say about Broadway, bad as it is. Some mighty fine things have been done and are being done there—by Eugene O'Neill, Maxwell Anderson, Robert Sherwood and others. And I want to keep on writing for the Broadway theatre too."

"Well, suit yourself. But I like this symphonic thing you talk about. And if you believe in it, stick to it, you'll lick the drawbacks and difficulties you find in it. That's our American way—to lick difficulties. And the people will support you in it. Watch my words and see if they don't."

"I hope so."

"They will. Look beyond that curve yonder, will you—that bridge we're coming to! What a thing! Swinging right out in space across that river—a thousand feet of suspension from pier to pier. Man. man! Beautiful!"

"It is."

"Just think of it while we roll across it," he said. "Think of it—of all the sweat and the hard labor that went into its making."

"I'm thinking," I said.

## Angels In The Snow

Five martinis (just four-to-one dry) two hours and three faux pas later the drunk unnoticed and clumsily heaving between conversationalists smiled a bland way to rattle the front door open and alone breathe in a world risen irresistibly white above boots and knees. The early night, perfect even to quarter moon and twinkling of stars, sentimentalized not only the rooftops branches and lamps of the town but also the silence of the mind, even as if the dim reaches that made his thoughts should freeze their rumbling to mounds of winter. With that, he marred the semblance of the world, not crudely stamping it his; but backward he so carefully fell and arced his arms and legs to make not one angel in the snow but graceful somersaults back and back, a whole row—to the horizon—of angels. At which margin his sparkled overcoat roamed home to warm in closeting. His immortal part waited the ascension of all those creatures he had used to combat the crystal that the world became and joined them in a giddy jig high against the malice of the night.

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## Pocket Full Of Rye



August settled over the town like a soft flannel rag. Gilloy's mill, just east of the depot, blew its noon whistle and a straggling group of flour dusted workers drifted into the yard to hunt shade and open lunch boxes.

"Dern, if it ain't another scorcher. I done drunk enough water to float away on. Look here how my gut's all bloated up," Josh said, slapping his flabby stomach and mumbling through a mouth full of bread and pork.

Fender grinned at his friend, conscious of his own flat stomach and lean legs.

The two men chewed in silence, watching the heat make squiggle lines up from the switch yard across the road.

"You takin' Eve Jo to the picnic?" Josh snapped the lid on his battered lunch pail and stretched his legs in front of him.

"Maybe," Fender said, still watching the yard.

"You spendin' another evening hanging around that fat little widow at the cafe?"

"Don't know."

"Hell, if'n I was you, I'd be making time with that little Eve Jo. That tail wiggler is sure crazy about you, Fender." Josh elbowed his friend and snickered through large yellow teeth.

"Ye think so?" Fender said, still eyeing the switch yard.

"Hell, yes." Josh wiggled his fat shoulders and clicked his fingers to an imaginary tune. "She's so good to you, ain't she, boy?" Josh laughed again and winked.

"Yeah."

"Why you spendin' all your time sittin' around that cafe with that old widow? Why she's old enough to be your Ma."

"No, she ain't. But she makes the best damn pies you ever et."

"Is that all she's a givin' you, Fender?" Josh elbowed Fender in the ribs, "Just them damn old pies?"

"You're gonna' get your mouth busted wide open one of these days, Josh,

I swear to God you are."

The whistle blew again and the group of tired men began to grumble and close lunch boxes.

"Yoo, hoo! Charlie Fender." Eve Jo, running in that awkward way women do, came down the road, waving her bare pink arms. "Yoo hoo. Charlie. Oh, I knew I'd be late. Brought some pie for you, Charlie. Pineapple. All we had left after the noon rush at the cafe." She pressed the soggy, paper wrapped glob into Fender's hand.

"Whew, but it's hot ain't it?" Eve Jo's bleached hair hung in wet strands along her neck; her round pink face had broken out in sweat beads through the heavy paste make-up.

"Tell Mrs. Cramer thanks." Fender said.

"Hell, the pie ain't from her, it's from me. I sneaked it out for you and toted it all the way down here in this heat."

Fender noticed Josh grinning, his eyes transfixed on Eve Jo's low cut uniform.

"You go on in, Josh, and tell Buck I'll be there directly."

Josh strolled off and winked at Fender.

"Is he your friend?" Eve Jo said following Josh with her eyes.

"I know him."

"Sorta cute, kinda' fat tho. You're not goin' in yet. If'n I can run all the way up here from Fifth Street in this heat you can at least spare me a little talk."

"Yeah."

"Well, I was wonderin' if you're goin' to the dance at Rock Springs to-night?" Eve Jo smiled longingly at Fender. She reached back and pulled her hair high off the back of her neck showing large sweat circles in the faded green uniform. "I was already asked a couple of times, Charlie Fender. But I sorta had my eye on you."

"Is that a fact." Fender shifted the pie to the other hand.

"They got that new band up at the Springs, come all the way from Tulsa, just for one night."

The workers had all wandered into the mill. Fender looked toward the loading docks where the boss usually took a smoke before the afternoon shifts went on.

"Eve Jo, I'd have to see about getting Buck's pick-up."

"Course, if you don't want to go."

"It ain't that."

"Then we'll go tonight?"

"I said I'd have to see about it."

"O.K."

The boss strolled around to the shaded side of the loading dock and waved at Fender to get the hell in.

"See you tonight, Eve Jo," Fender called back to her as he fast trotted it across the yard. "Tell Mrs. Cramer, the pie was real good."

"Tell her yourself." Eve Jo scuffed her toeless sandal in the dust and



flipped her thin blonde hair away from the back of her neck again. She joggled her shoulders a bit as she looked at the boss. He was watching her. Her ample mouth twisted itself into a get-acquainted smile and she swayed her plump rear a bit when she started up the road to Fifth Street.

The afternoon turned into an airless lull, and by evening the wind stilled like a dusty blanket hung over the town.

They were already putting up folding chairs around the band pavilion and spreading checkered cloths over rickety card tables in the square. A few members of the band had wandered in and sat on benches, sampling chilled lemonade and tooting cracked notes on their horns. Three little girls were playing stoop-tag between the sagging tables and there was a dog fight under the legs of some old ladies, who had their hearing aids turned down.

Eve Jo sat on a bench at the end of the park, occasionally adjusting a large straw hat. When she saw Fender coming across the street to the square carrying the huge pie baskets of Mrs. Cramer she sat back and didn't speak. Mrs. Cramer came toddling after Fender, chattering and carrying more pies.

"We'll have to make two trips, Charles. I hope these cream pies don't sit out too long." Mrs. Cramer's large feet found their way through the litter of card tables and chattering church ladies, while Fender set out the pies and nodded to the giggly women. He started back to the cafe. Mrs. Cramer hurried to catch up.

Eve Jo looked the other way when Fender and the widow came back across the park.

"Guess I can lock up now. My, but there ain't a breath of air in that park." Mrs. Cramer checked the register in the cafe and pulled off the fluorescent tube over the back tables. You stayin' for awhile, aren't you, Charles?"

"I was goin' up to Rock Springs, but couldn't get a car." Fender sat at the end of the counter turning half circles on the stool. "I ain't made no plans definite yet."

"Well, come on over to the park, the food's good." Mrs. Cramer slid a glass of iced water across the counter to Fender and hiked up on the stool behind the cigar case.

"You been here in this town almost a year now, ain't you Charles?"

"Little over, I figure."

"Now, not gettin' personal or nothin' but I was wonderin' . . ."

"Hell no." Fender grinned and took a gulp of water. "Glad to have someone to talk to."

"Well, I was just thinkin'. Why didn't you ever get married, Charles?"

"Never wanted to. Well . . . Maybe I've thought about it a couple times. Almost married a gal when I was in the Army. But her Dad used to look at me sideways every time I'd come around."

"Is that a fact?"

"Yeah, you know how some old guys are, expect their daughters to marry a damn prince or something."

"Yeah."

"That gal had the skinniest legs I ever seen." Fender looked out the front window and turned the cool glass between his palms. "I used to wake up nights and just think about that gal in a pair of pants with them skinny legs. What a sight she must have been. God, I'm glad I didn't get tied up to that gal. I guess some poor guy is stuck with her now, and them legs."

Mrs. Cramer reached around and switched on the fan by the register and cupped her hands around her pale cheeks. The fan droned against the early evening heat in the deserted cafe and the paper lanterns began to twinkle on across the street in the park.

Fender spun his empty glass on the counter.

"Charles, you need someone to do things for you. Have your own little place."

"Yeah, that would be real nice. Ma just took off and left me and Papa. Then Pa took off. Relatives took turns at raisin' me. Guess it ain't really a house so much I want sometimes, but a sort of feeling inside that needs feeding. You know, a hollow rumble in your stomach when you're hungry."

Mrs. Cramer wiped the sweat beads around her mouth, "Charles I know just what you mean." She sighed and looked over to the square. "It comes most of all at night when the whole world seems to be asleep and you're the only human awake and walking the floor."

"Yeah, that's it. It sure does get me sometimes."

Fender drained the last drop from the glass and looked across at the park to the milling shadows of the picnickers. The band began to play a tune. Someone was off key.

Mrs. Cramer wiped her glasses and slipped them back on. "I'd better get over there, promised I'd pitch in and help a bit." She picked through her keys and waited by the door for Fender. He slid off the stool and pulled the front light.

Fender was munching through his second piece of chocolate pie when Eve Jo wiggled by on the arm of Josh and tossed him a smug hello. Josh nodded and winked triumphantly.

Fender scraped his paper plate clean and strolled about the picnickers looking for Mrs. Cramer. She was by the big table, cutting pies and dishing up scoops of potato salad. He found a bench and watched her, listening to the off key music. Half the players had wandered off to eat and sneak a drink out by the parked cars.

The picnic went into its decline. Tired ladies began gathering up empty bowls and whiney kids; men sat in confidential groups on benches near the cars and talked and laughed. Someone had passed a bottle around, but it was empty now and everyone wanted to go home.

Fender gathered up the pie baskets and followed Mrs. Cramer across to the cafe. She pulled on the fluorescent over the register.

Fender spun the stool next to him. "Guess I'd better get going. Know you have to open up early in the morning."

"No use rushing off, Charles."

"Yeah, that room of mine is like a oven. Got a tin roof on it."

"Charles, have some pop with me. It ain't too late." Mrs. Cramer pulled

two chilled bottles from the cooler and popped off the tops; they clattered into the tin catch box. "I don't relish the thought of going back to the house either. It's sorta lonesome when it's late and still like this."

They drank the cold pop in silence and watched the last picnickers leave the park. Cars and pick-ups droned away and quiet closed down around the square.

"Do you know the loneliest thing in the world, Mrs. Cramer?"

"A train whistle in the middle of the night?"

"Nope, just a sign. A little white card with a corner bent off usually, black letters and sorta stuck catty-waumpus in the parlor windows of folks' old houses. SLEEPING ROOMS. Just that. SLEEPING ROOMS. A lumpy bed with a roof over it, ten dollars a week and you can call it home. But no drinkin', no cookin', and wash the tub when you're done and leave the stool lid down. And them damn linoleum floors. I hate them floors. Cold and slick, except in the worn places. I hate 'em. Sometimes I think I'll get me a little rug or something for my feet in the morning."

"Them signs is lonesome lookin', ain't they."

"Ever since I was fourteen and out on my own, I've been lookin' for them signs in front windows. Sure feel sorry for myself sometimes a huntin' them."

Mrs. Cramer reached out and patted Fender's rough hand.

"Honest to God, Mrs. Cramer, some times I think I'd rather curl up under a porch like some damn dog than look for another one of them signs." Fender took a mouthful of red soda pop.

Mrs. Cramer patted Fender's hand again and smiled. "Charles, come on home with me. It's cooler over at my little place. I've got some gin in the ice box. We could sit on the porch and talk."

Fender looked at the cheerful round face, her eyes were a pale blue, like cloudy marbles, staring up at him, huge and unreal looking, magnified through her thick glasses. Her faded blonde stubby lashes and eyebrows gave her an expressionless stare.

"It ain't a long walk, Charles, just up on Elm."

Fender pulled off the light and they walked into the quiet street, locking the cafe door after them.

The porch was cool, shaded from the street behind a heavy bank of honeysuckle that rustled softly in the faint hot breeze like whispered secrets. The kitchen light was left on after Mrs. Cramer had mixed two weak drinks in lemon soda; it glowed into a soft orange square at the door like a hidden fire that had started somewhere in the house. She had put on a flowered kimono that had wilted ruffles around the neck. Her red satin slippers flip-flopped across the porch floor as she walked over to Fender. She had dabbed on some cheap oily perfume. The scent hung suspended in the heavy air like bubbles from a soap pipe, a sickening sweetish smell of mildewed flowers and burnt sugar. She had taken off her glasses and brushed back her hair as she sat down next to Fender in the swing, pulling her kimono together at her waist.

Fender winced at the sweetness of the lemon drink but it was cold

and the gin made him feel relaxed. The sight of Eve Jo scooting into the front seat of Josh's car and heading off in the direction of Rock Springs didn't bother him then and he began to enjoy the cool privacy of the widow's darkened porch.

"I hope you don't mind me takin' so long. But I usually change when I get home. . . . Is your drink all right? . . . I'm not very good at mixing drinks but I always keep a little gin around, you know, just good to relax with sometimes."

"Yeah."

She scooted closer and he began listening to the quiet voice when she put her hand against his arm.

"Charles, I've been thinking. How well we get along and all. I don't see why we couldn't work something out. You like the cafe. It's a fine business. Not a lot of money, you understand, but good and steady. You're better than just a mill hand, Charles, I could see that the first day you walked into my place. I got this little house too; it's all paid for."

Fender stopped swinging and held his glass tight in both hands.

"Charles, now you know that Eve Jo ain't for you. She ain't no good. She don't have nothing to give you, not like I do."

Fender sat looking at the darkened honeysuckle waiting for Mrs. Cramer to say something. She breathed hard and her voice was suddenly deep and moist.

"Charles, I know what you're thinking. You're thinking about the little difference in our ages. But it really ain't so much. I've worked hard all my life, been on my feet in that cafe from the day I married. It's hard on a woman. I look like I got more years on me than I really do, everybody says that. You know how hard I work, don't you Charles?"

Mrs. Cramer took a deep drink of her sweetish gin drink, "I don't expect love. Not the love young people look for, that's just a dream. I know you like me; you're coming in to see me all the time. I don't expect love, love is a lonely island that few people really ever find. But we could have something better, couldn't we, Charles? Couldn't we?"

"I don't know." Fender found his voice and gulped down the rest of the sweet drink.

"We wouldn't be lonely. That's the important thing. I feel like I'm the only one in the whole world. There ain't nothin' out there in the night on the other side of them pulled down window shades. Just me . . . . That's a awful feelin' knowing nobody cares, ain't it, Charles? Ain't it really?"

Mrs. Cramer's quiet whispered voice cracked into little sobs and she sucked in air and sniffled trying to say something to cover up the silence.

"My God, Mrs. Cramer, don't cry."

"I'm sorry, I should be ashamed. But, I'm not. I'm not, Charles. What's wrong with telling someone what you want, telling them you need something."

"You ain't done nothing wrong."

"I know what you're thinking. I know I'm not as pretty as I used to be,

but being pretty ain't going to last forever for no gal. You know that, don't you Charles?"

"Sure I do."

"Well, I knew you was smarter than most of those that comes into my place. I just knew it from the first day."

"I ain't really smart, Mrs. Cramer." Fender felt his face get hot and his palms get wet. "I sure do like you tho, sweet and jolly and baking good things to eat and all . . ."

"You probably think I'm just some old woman trying to get a man to marry me so I can have someone to sleep with."

"Mrs. Cramer, I swear to God, I never thought that."

"Well, it ain't so. I want someone to talk to and be with. Is there something wrong with that?"

"Course not."

Mrs. Cramer began crying again and Fender pulled her to him and smoothed her sobs and patted her arm. "Don't you cry any more, Mrs. Cramer, you didn't do nothing wrong. I don't think you're a dried up old woman, or anything like that, honest to God I don't."

"Please help me, Charles, please."

"Sure, but it's late now so you go on into bed and when I come in the cafe for breakfast we can talk about it."

He patted her arm and said good-night. She clung to him, kissing his mouth before he walked away.

When Fender turned the corner heading south, he looked back. Mrs. Cramer was standing on the porch steps still waving. He saw the white of her wet handkerchief flipping back and forth like a signal against the dark honeysuckle.

It wasn't a long walk to the depot. After he collected his things from his room and left a message for Buck, he walked, smelling the fresh night air. It had cooled off and a breeze began blowing across the town from the east.

He waited the two hours for the 1:15 with his one-way ticket in his pocket, trying not to think of Mrs. Cramer. Or the sick feeling he got when he looked at her eager face in the light of the door just before he pulled her arms away and stepped off the porch steps.

He found a day-old Tulsa paper in the men's room. By the time the 1:15 groaned into the station he had read through the sleeping room ads, and checked off three that looked pretty good.

*John Foster West*

## Midcenturian

Dread is an avalanche hanging scotched,  
Poised to leap on a steep alp slope,  
While we dance our jig in blossom spring  
Or in apple fall skip our silken rope,  
One eye aslant, crouching to stampede,  
As we toy with the tale of Mrs. Murphy's slip,  
Laughing up our sleeves with fingers at our loins  
And whirling, whirling, sweat on the lip.  
With one eye aslant and a high-tuned ear,  
We propagate and sleep, always aware  
Of an avalanche scotched on an alpine slope;  
And dread hangs thus, brooding in the air,  
In spite of deed or mustard seed  
Or riving of the hair.

JOHN FOSTER WEST *helped to found The Carolina Quarterly and was a member of the original Fiction Board. He is now a professor of English at Elon College.*

Mary Evelyn Jefferson

## The Heart Of The Matter: The Responsible Man

Who is this man?

His name is Scobie; he is the central character in Graham Greene's novel, *The Heart of the Matter*. He is a rather ordinary, insignificant man—stocky, gray-haired, about fifty years old. He is the Deputy Commissioner of Police, during the early 1940's, in Sierra Leone, an imaginary British colony on Africa's West Coast. He is a good policeman, careful and conscientious—Scobie the Just; but it is precisely this fact that makes him "a wonderful man for picking up enemies" at the Secretariat, and so his promotion to the position of Commissioner has been passed over. He has a wife, Louise, for whom his love has long since given way to a greater pity. He has a mistress, Helen Rolt, whom he also pities. He feels a terrible responsibility for the happiness of both women. He has allowed himself to be blackmailed by Yusef, the Syrian, into passing contraband diamonds, and he has acquiesced, *almost* unknowingly, to the murder of his native servant, Ali. He is a Catholic. He is now planning to commit suicide.

Who is this man?

"I am the responsible man," he says of himself. And, certainly, this awareness of responsibility is a major motivation for Scobie. He is a man who can assume the risk of making promises—promises that he feels bound to keep, to which he must be faithful. He is, in this respect, Kierkegaard's "ethical man"—one who chooses himself, who defines his identity, in terms of responsible relationships with other persons.

By his marriage vows at the altar on his wedding day, Scobie had chosen to be himself in the relationship of husband to Louise. (It is significant that Kierkegaard's symbol of the "ethical stage" is marriage—the situation in which one quite literally says "I do" to another who can say "I do.") And in addition to his public vows, Scobie had made another promise:

No man could guarantee love for ever, but he had sworn fourteen years ago, at Ealing, silently, during the horrible little elegant ceremony among the lace and candles, that he could at least always see to it that she was happy.

This promise has bound him as irrevocably as his marriage vows. As his love for Louise has receded to the point of disillusion, and as pity for her misery has taken its place, his awareness of responsibility for its fulfillment

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has increased.

It was Louise—lonely, rather unattractive, the “city intellectual” without friends in an alien society—who was most disappointed when Scobie failed to get his promotion. Moved by pity for the unhappy wife, Scobie borrowed the necessary money from Yusef so that she might go to South Africa for a few months to visit friends. He could know no inner peace as long as she was unhappy, and this is what he has always yearned for in the depths of his being.

For he dreamed of peace by day and night. Once in sleep it had appeared to him as the great glowing shoulder of the moon heaving across his window like an iceberg, arctic and destructive in the moment before the world was struck: . . . Peace seemed to him the most beautiful word in the language: My peace I give you, my peace I leave with you: O Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, grant us thy peace.

As the “ethical man,” Scobie’s relationship with God requires fidelity to the fulfillment of his moral obligations. He feels that he cannot accept God’s peace until he has discharged the duties entailed by his responsibility to carry out the vows made at the altar at Ealing. His relationship to the Absolute—symbolized for him by the peace for which he longs—is relative to his absolute relationship to his ethical commitments.

So Scobie arranged for Louise’s vacation. But peace was not to be his for long. Soon after Louise left, the war that had seemed rather remote from his unimportant colony finally came to his doorstep: on his Coast arrived a boatload of wounded and exhausted passengers from a torpedoed ship. Among them was Helen Rolt—a girl of nineteen, ugly and wasted from the forty-day ordeal in the open boat. Her husband of one month had been lost when the ship was sunk. Here was another object for Scobie’s pity. And this emotion always involved his sense of responsibility—not evoked by the competent and beautiful but by the weak and helpless and unlovely: by the victims of the world’s cruelty.

Responding instinctively, therefore, to the command of Helen’s need, Scobie sought to help her. Rather than abandon her to loneliness and the lascivious Bagster howling outside her door, he entered into an affair with her—and soon heard himself making another promise: “I’ll always be here if you need me as long as I’m alive.” He had again entered into an ethical contract, defining himself in a meaningful way in terms of relationship to another person. But even as he committed himself, he felt the despair of the “ethical man” who recognizes that there is a contradiction in his promises which denies his ability to fulfil the obligations he has assumed. For Scobie knew that Louise’s happiness—the happiness he was irrevocably sworn to seek to secure—would be shattered by his relationship with Helen. But he had now committed himself, by a vow which he felt to be equally as binding (a sure sign of the “ethical man”!), to maintain that relationship. The conditions of keeping each promise demanded the violation of the other;

each excluded the possibility of fulfillment of the other.

So far, Scobie has been considered in the light of Kierkegaard's category of the ethical. It might be well to suggest that he also displays certain characteristics of the "aesthetic man." There seems to be some indication that his commitments were not wholly to Louise and Helen as persons in their own right. It is not the total structure of personality in these other selves that calls forth his willingness to accept responsibility, but it is their need of him that attracts him. To the degree that he sees them as objects in relation to himself rather than as subjects in their own right, his attitude is aesthetic. Scobie himself comes close sometimes to recognizing that there is a distinction to be made:

It occurred to him as it hadn't occurred to him, for years, that she loved him: poor dear, she loved him: she was someone of human stature with her own sense of responsibility, not simply the object of his care and kindness.

Louise returned from her vacation. A letter which Scobie had written to reassure Helen of his love fell into Yusef's hands, and he used it to blackmail Scobie into taking a packet of diamonds aboard a Portuguese ship. Later, Scobie became suspicious that his boy, Ali, whom he had loved and trusted completely, knew of his adultery and might expose him, and, already enmeshed in Yusef's web, he accepted his offer to "arrange something"—what was arranged was Ali's murder. The downward pace accelerated.

Bound by his vows to Louise—not merely because he is a Catholic but chiefly because he is Scobie ("I am the responsible man"); equally bound by his promise to Helen, Scobie sinks deeper into despair the harder he tries to find a solution to his problem. As his suffering grows more acute, he trembles on the brink of Kierkegaard's "religious stage." The supposition of the possibility of fidelity to ethical commitments has been shattered, and salvation requires a new orientation.

Scobie is not innocent; he "knows"—as a Catholic—the "right" solution: to abandon Helen, confess his adultery, be absolved, and receive Communion in the "state of grace." The Church's answer is the clear call of God—a vocation. But Scobie cannot sacrifice another human being—particularly a weak and helpless one—even for the sake of his own soul. In some dim way he associates Helen with his daughter, Catherine, who had died when she was nine years old. He is an Abraham called to sacrifice his own innocent and trusting child. But unlike Abraham, Scobie is not a "knight of faith." What is required is what Kierkegaard calls a "teleological suspension of the ethical," but Scobie cannot renounce his human responsibilities for the sake of God. He cannot will to stand in an absolute relationship with the Absolute and a relative relationship with the relative.

In the despair that lies between the ethical and religious "stages" Scobie pleads with God:

O God, convince me, help me, convince me. Make me feel that I am more important than that child. . . . Make me put

my own soul first. Give me trust in your mercy to the one I abandon.

But—"I am the responsible man." Scobie feels that he can no more trust his responsibilities to God than to anyone else.

In the Confessional Scobie had realized that he could not make a "good confession"—that he could not promise God to abandon Helen and avoid the further occasion of adultery. And so the next morning, unabsolved but unable any longer to put off going to Mass with Louise, he knelt at the altar rail to receive Communion—in a state of mortal sin.

Only a miracle can save me now, Scobie told himself, watching Father Rank at the altar opening the tabernacle, but God would never work a miracle to save Himself. I am the Cross, he thought: He will never speak the word to save Himself from the Cross, but if only wood were made so that it didn't feel, if only the nails were as senseless as people believe. . . . But with open mouth (the time had come) he made one last attempt at prayer, "O God, I offer up my damnation to you. Take it. Use it for them," and was aware of the pale papery taste of his eternal sentence on the tongue.

So now, believing himself damned anyway, Scobie is planning to commit suicide. He is convinced that as long as he lives he cannot abandon either Louise or Helen—even to the mercy of God. He considers his very existence a threat to the happiness of those he is trying to protect. And he cannot continue to punish God by the sacrilege he commits at the Communion rail. Louise and Helen can accept his death, he believes, without the particular suffering either would feel if he deserted her. The death of an insignificant, middle-aged man from some sort of illness is something to which one can become reconciled.

His decision is made. His answer to the call of God is no.

O God, I am the guilty one because I've preferred to give you pain rather than give pain to Helen or to my wife because I can't observe your suffering. I can only imagine it. But there are limits to what I can do to you—or them. I can't desert either of them while I'm alive, but I can die and remove myself from their blood-stream. They are ill with me and I can cure them. And you too, God—you are ill with me . . . You'll be better off if you lose me once and for all. I know what I'm doing. I'm not pleading for mercy. I am going to damn myself, whatever that means. I've longed for peace and I'm never going to know peace again. But you'll be at peace when I'm out of your reach. It will be no use then sweeping the floor to find me or searching for me over the mountains. You'll be able to forget me, God, for eternity.

But at the very end, the final words: "Dear God, I love . . ."

## II.

The problem of responsibility and attendant guilt with which Scobie struggles so desperately in *The Heart of the Matter* needs now to be examined.

The possibility of the assumption of moral responsibility pre-supposes an ontological assumption of responsibility. Scobie must first have "taken himself upon himself," willing to be a self which transcends itself, before he becomes subject to having to make moral choices. This assumption of selfhood requires a certain knowledge of good and evil; it implies loss of innocence and, consequently, the incurring of ontological guilt.

It is this problem with which Scobie is ultimately concerned. Driven to despair by the devastation of his trust in the possibility of fidelity to ethical commitments, he seeks to destroy the self he had willed to be—"the responsible man," who alone is capable of making such commitments. He sees in suicide (paradoxically, the supreme act of self-assertion) a solution to the problem of ontological guilt incurred as the result of responsible selfhood. By taking his life—by a radical refusal to be—he seeks the annihilation of self. In the final analysis, his suicide is not an attempt to solve the moral dilemma he faces; that effort is abandoned as hopeless, and what is sought is surcease of the ontological guilt that weighs upon him.

Moral responsibility is possible for Scobie only because of his prior willing to be a self. So willing, he is capable of pursuing values and of becoming involved in the contradiction which is the product of conflicting ethical commitments. This leads to moral guilt—that is, the recognition of one's inability to resolve the contradiction.

Scobie defines himself in terms of dedication to the idea of responsibility; it is in so doing that he "takes himself upon himself." But he then finds that that very dedication requires of him the assumption of conflicting moral responsibilities. This contradiction in purposes is impossible of resolution, and so Scobie is doomed to failure, the knowledge of which produces acute suffering and guilt, eventually leading to despair. And yet this failure is the result of his greatest achievement as a human being: choosing responsible selfhood.

Despair is the price one pays for setting oneself an impossible aim. It is, one is told, the unforgivable sin, but it is a sin the corrupt or evil man never practices. He always has hope. He never reaches the freezing point of knowing absolute failure. Only the man of good will carries always in his heart this capacity for damnation.

Scobie's concept of responsibility requires that he take upon himself the alleviation of pain wherever he encounters it. It is curiously bound up in the structure of his personality with the emotion of pity. Scobie is wholly unable to witness another's distress dispassionately; he feels compelled to "do something about it." The assumption of responsibility is an almost instinctive reaction whenever his pity is evoked.

He had no sense of responsibility towards the beautiful and the graceful and the intelligent. They could find their own way. It was the face for which nobody would go out of his way, the face that would never catch the covert look, the face which would soon be used to rebuffs and indifference, that demanded his allegiance.

Out of pity (lingering beyond love) for his lonely, dissatisfied wife, Scobie becomes embroiled with Yusef to provide for her vacation; out of pity (flowering briefly into desire) for the waif on his doorstep, he begins the affair with Helen; out of pity (distorting the truth) for a God too weak to protect Himself from the Cross, he takes his own life. He takes the responsibility of suffering so that others need not suffer.

And yet the reversed coin of this seemingly generous virtue reveals itself as a kind of vice. For Scobie's overwhelming sense of his individual responsibility implies distrust of the capabilities of others. It is a perversion of virtue; it is, in effect, pride in masquerade. Louise perhaps, with the proper kind of encouragement, could have mastered her disappointment and matured in the process; Scobie's misdirected pity and comforting lies denied her this opportunity for development. Helen perhaps, with the help of sincere friendship, could have withstood the advances of Bagster until her ship sailed for England and safety; Scobie's intervention taught her the ways of deceit and bitterness. And God, certainly, has survived the flagellation of mankind for an eternity.

Of course, if Scobie had acted otherwise than the way he did, he would have been a different self—and that would be another book! But two points are attempted here with the suggestion of different courses of action: first, that there existed the possibility of choice in the responses Scobie made to the situations confronting him; and second, that his misuse of his real freedom—the freedom to accept his existence and vocation as the gift of God—constituted his sin.

Scobie failed to comprehend the significance of his freedom. He saw it restricted and coerced by God rather than by the contradiction in his pursuit of the cross-purposes demanded by fidelity to his egocentric concept of himself. To be true to himself—to "the responsible man" he chose to be—he had to make certain promises which, by their very nature, contradicted each other. And when faced with the failure that is the inevitable result of such contradiction, he still could go no further than to reassert his selfhood with all its entangling moral responsibilities.

If you made me, you made this feeling of responsibility that I've always carried about like a sack of bricks . . . I can't shift my responsibility to you. If I could, I would be someone else.

What Scobie failed to see was that his moral obligations were not imposed upon him by God. But although he did not recognize that his feeling of responsibility was of his own choosing, he did realize that it was what

defined the identity by which he knew himself.

It has already been suggested that Scobie's excessive sense of responsibility indicates distrust of the resources of others. It is a presumption of superior strength in himself in contrast to the weakness he sees in others. He is the "iron man"—the man who does not really need anyone, the man who requires no props, who prefers not to have around him the accumulation of intimate, personal possessions which serve as crutches for the feeblar personality. All of this is underscored by the interaction, mentioned before, between his feeling of pity and his sense of responsibility.

In addition to being unable to trust other persons, Scobie is also unwilling to trust God. And it is this which constitutes his ultimate sin. He lacks faith in God's ability to take care of those for whom he considers himself alone responsible. Rather than surrender any part of that burden to the mercy of God, he will forego salvation. As he moves toward suicide, God speaks to him through his despair:

You say you love me, and yet you'll do this to me—rob me of you forever. I made you with love. I've wept your tears. I've saved you from more than you will ever know; I planted in you this longing for peace only so that one day I could satisfy your longing and watch your happiness. And now you push me away, you put me out of reach. There are no capital letters to separate us when we talk together. I am not Thou but simply you, when you speak to me; I am humble as any other beggar. Can't you trust me as you'd trust a faithful dog? I have been faithful to you for two thousand years . . . One of them will suffer, but can't you trust me to see that the suffering isn't too great?

But Scobie replies:

No. I don't trust you. I love you, but I've never trusted you.

Scobie's hybris, then—his sin—is this defiant lack of faith which seeks to limit the infinitude of God to the finite bounds of his own egocentric conception of His power. He seizes God's gift of freedom to be a self as a right belonging to him, and he perverts it to his own uses in a gesture of defiance. Brought to despair by the impasse of his ethical commitments, two courses are open to him: self-damnation by defiance or salvation by faithful repentance and acceptance of freedom as a gift. Scobie despairs—and takes the former course in the most radical way possible.

### III.

So Scobie's story ends with his suicidal death and, consequently, his eternal damnation. Or does it?

As a Catholic, Scobie "knows" what he is doing. He is sure that he is cutting himself off forever from the presence of God—that he is damning himself for all eternity never to know the blessed peace for which he had yearned. He expects hell to be a "permanent sense of loss." From this point

of view, his story must be viewed as really tragic, because his death is seen as complete and ultimate annihilation. As he wrestled with God in the last days of his life, there was no doubt in Scobie's mind that this was what his suicide would mean.

But earlier in the story there had been an intimation that Scobie was not so sure that suicide irrevocably condemned one to suffer eternally the loss of God.

The priests told you it was the unforgivable sin, the final expression of an unrepentant despair, and of course one accepted the Church's teaching. But they taught also that God had sometimes broken his own laws, and was it more impossible for him to put out a hand of forgiveness into the suicidal darkness and chaos than to have woken himself in the tomb, behind the stone?

Scobie, at this point, comes close to "the heart of the matter."

The paragraph quoted above seems to point to the last pages of the book when Louise, having discovered that Scobie's death had actually resulted from suicide rather than angina, talks hopelessly with Father Rank:

"He must have known that he was damning himself."

"Yes, he knew that all right. He never had any trust in mercy—except for other people."

"It's no good even praying . . ."

Father Rank clapped the cover of the diary to and said, furiously, "For goodness' sake, Mrs. Scobie, don't imagine you—or I—know a thing about God's mercy."

"The Church says . . ."

"I know the Church says. The Church knows all the rules. But it doesn't know what goes on in a single human heart."

"You think there's some hope then?" she wearily asked.

"Are you so bitter against him?"

"I haven't any bitterness left."

"And do you think God's likely to be more bitter than a woman?" he said with harsh insistence, but she winced away from the arguments of hope.

Scobie's Catholicism is a crucial element of his particular story, and it must be taken into consideration in any attempt to understand the nature of the conflict which engages him. But a broader application, not associated with a particular creed, can be made of the general theme of man's self-damnation and the possibility of his redemption.

Unlike pagan thought, which found the ultimate source of meaning—the fundamentally divine—in the prescriptive law of impersonal order, Biblical thought finds the ultimate source of meaning in the sovereign and creative will of a personal God. Because the will of God is sovereign, it cannot be said to be "known" in the sense that pagan law was thought to be known; because it is creative, it cannot be said to be static or "closed" in the sense that further possibility is ever ruled out. This is the idea sug-



gested by Father Rank. The Church knows "the rules," but it cannot know—that is, it cannot encompass with the human understanding—the infinite possibility of the absolutely free and active will of God—which may offer mercy even for a finally repentant Scobie. To know is to limit—to draw a line between that which is known and that which is not known. If the line cannot be drawn, knowledge, as such, is not available, and only faith—which draws no lines—remains as the irrational response to the vast mysteriousness of the divine. Faith does not restrict, does not presume to know what cannot be known; it simply acknowledges that anything may be possible to the sovereignty of a purposeful, willing God.

Because there may be, then, a sequel to the final chapter of Scobie's story that has not been written; because there is yet the possibility that God might "put out a hand of forgiveness into the suicidal darkness and chaos," *The Heart of the Matter* cannot be called a true tragedy in the pagan sense. It is, rather, a serious kind of irony—as all "tragedies" may be considered from the standpoint of reference to the God of the Bible. It is ironic rather than tragic in that the eventual outcome is still in doubt. This is not to deny Scobie's torment, but to affirm that it is not necessarily the ultimate resolution. Even beyond death there is the possibility of repentance and eventual salvation by the infinite mercy of God.

Father Rank's words to Louise emphasize the irony prevailing at the very "heart of the matter," but they are not necessary to its recognition. Of greater significance is the last moment of Scobie's human existence:

It seemed to him as though someone outside the room were seeking him, calling him, and he made a last effort to indicate that he was here. He got on his feet and heard the hammer of his heart beating out a reply. He had a message to convey, but the darkness and the storm drove it back within the case of his breast, and all the time outside the house, outside the world that drummed like hammer blows within his ear, someone wandered, seeking to get in, someone appealing for help, someone in need of him.

## Notes On Sculpture

In recent years artists have been asked to translate into words the ideas they originally presented in their own media of art. This is wholesome and admirable, but there are some dangers involved. For instance, the reader or listener might tend to accept the words of the artist as being of the same degree of primacy as the work of art itself. The work must stand solely as a communication from the artist.

Before any true work of art can come into existence there must be a need on the part of the artist. My need has arisen from the multiple reactions of my existence in and relation to the world around me. The discovery of the endless forms of a tree, for instance, the manner in which this object of nature disrupts space, arouses and excites curiosity in me. Perceiving



*Preliminary sketch for PHOENIX I*



*PHOENIX I (Selected by the Art Association of New Orleans for a national exhibition in New Orleans, La., March and April, 1957)*

*JAMES BREWER, of Asheville, N. C., is a senior at the University of North Carolina, where he is an assistant in the Department of Art. He has received a scholarship for advanced study of sculpture at Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan for 1957-58.*

the innumerable forms, textures, and colors of the tree are the beginning points of making a discovery.

The perception of the natural object, together with identifications, associations, and the emotional realization, creates a tremendous undirected force within me which I feel a need to condense into a meaningful interpretation . . . . a sculpture.

Once aware of the force, I think of an expressive manner by which to convey the interpretation. I find that through making many drawings, ideas come forth from which, after sorting and developing, there evolves an initial idea for the sculpture. I am not implying that the drawing results in a photographic reproduction of the end sculpture; should this be the case why create the sculpture at all?

While making the drawings I am conscious of the medium in which the sculpture is to be executed. Sculptural materials can limit the artist to certain given forms, structures, and shapes. Hence, the material must lend itself to the sculpture, for the sculpture must bear the strength it presents.

I utilize the ideas developed from my drawings as being of the whole sculpture. The forms have to be integrated in a manner in which they reflect a singular forceful meaning. At times, I have chanced upon a discovery in creating a sculpture and in excitation I have overly developed the idea. Sometimes only after days and perhaps weeks of work am I again able to visualize the form as a whole.

Once my ideas evolve in sculptural form, it is necessary to adhere to order, yet arrange the parts in a manner which is a meaningful projection of myself. It is also necessary for me to be adaptable to change and to respond to each change which occurs.

The end sculpture is only one small part of individual growth and understanding. It is significant though, for even long after the completion of the sculpture I make new discoveries as my visualizations and perceptions grow. This process of search and discovery which I experience through sculpture is the manner in which I have chosen to understand better the world around me.



FAMILY GROUP

*James Brewer*

David DeJong

## End Of

It is a September-December with  
leaf-smoke feathering over  
old footpaths, and enveloping  
dismembered labyrinths of last  
summer's secret trystings,  
and dolorously recalling birds  
flown off with cawings and  
chatter, yet with compulsion.

I fold my hands once more  
to say the dead-end prayers  
and the lamb-land supplications  
which have never been answered  
from all the March-Maymonths,  
holding aloof and exalted  
the caustic mind which keeps  
on matching gains and ciphers.

And exorcise a constant scene,  
a stubborn tableau of unequal  
and unconquered days lying  
still as death in an old  
and ceremonial panoply, posing  
with wizened hands crossed  
over a secretive heart, yet  
exposed like Sunday gossip.

DAVID C. DEJONG, who taught a writing class at Chapel Hill three winters ago, is at present conducting a Fiction Workshop at Rhode Island University. His work has appeared in such publications as the *New Yorker*, *Atlantic*, and *Kenyon Review*.

## Lost Bread

Faimie Doucet sat heavily in the kitchen rocker and tried to be sorrowful but the truth was, she felt relieved. It was real nice to have quiet now . . . a stillness comforting as a shawl around your shoulders.

She thought about the old man finally dead just short of his hundredth year. Pa had been clamorous as a high wind and had filled the house with uproar and striving as long as she could think back. He had sired on three wives sons and daughters except for Faimie as loud and lusty as himself. Faimie wasn't like the others. She thought she must have been started different in the downstairs bedroom rank with he-smell and crowded with the black walnut bed under the shaking half-tester perpetually threatening to fall on the carnal commerce beneath. Pa had been seventy and Faimie's mother so wore down she had died birthing her. They had made her out of sated appetite and a tired resignation.

Faimie pushed against the hand-smooth arms of the rocker and got to her feet twitching at the straining buttons of her starched print dress. She didn't even look like the others. Where they were tall and hawk-eyed, she was round and brown as a cedar keg. Where they were overbearing and stormy, flat-footed and plain-spoken, she was soft and placid, born to be run over and imposed on, wanting life prettied up till the ugliness didn't show.

Looking at the kitchen clock she put a stick of wood in the fire and set on the skillet. It should be an hour before the girls came . . . time to fry up a pan of lost bread. She wouldn't want her sisters to catch her eating between meals, not when they jawed all the time at the way she was putting on flesh. Zette and Nini (Ma got the names for the girls, Euphemia, Lizette and Leonie out of a book, Pa had named the boys) never padded their string bean leanness no matter how gross they fed. Some people were just meant to be heavy, Faimie felt. Besides eating was the only respectable pleasure a spinster had. Maybe, now that Pa was gone she might get a chance . . . She wasn't no spring chicken but Pa had kept his promise and she'd heired the farm for taking care of him till the last.

Faimie broke eggs in the blue bowl and began beating in sugar and cream. The fork clicked rhythmically, the small sound speaking to the taste buds until Faimie's mouth watered. When the mixture became light and lemon colored she dropped a lump of butter into the skillet to sizzle and sputter in the quiet room. She dipped slices of light bread into the bowl, then set them to fry.

She watched the frying carefully, producing perfect pale yellow squares dappled with a bright brown crustiness. She forked up the slices, sprinkled them tenderly with sugar and perfumed them with a dusting of cinnamon, then carried the plate to the table like a thank offering to an altar.

Cutting the steaming slices delicately with the edge of her fork she ate



slowly each bite, prolonging the sweet buttery flavor. That was another aggravating thing about menfolk. They bolted their victuals like a pack of starved hounds. Faimie thought of all the food she had brought to this table . . . tubsfull of rusty gravy and ham that had stained mountains of grits to brown richness, pots of chicken with dumplings lifting the lids with their feathery lightness, rows and ranks of berry pies swimming in ruddy juices . . . all gulped down by Pa and her brothers when they lived home without a notion that food could feed the soul and pleasure the eye as well as stay the stomach. Faimie shook her head over men, dark appetites on legs driven by nasty cravings and demandings. She wiped the plate with the last morsel and ate reflectively.

Either she had lingered over the eating or Zette and Nini were early. She heard the top step creak and then the fly screen slapped behind them. No time to hide the plate in the dish cupboard . . . hurriedly she shoved it into the table drawer.

But the blush Faimie could never control flooded her face with a guilty red. Zette was a sharp one. Her bird-bright eyes flicked to the skillet still exhaling heat. Her thin nose sniffed the blue buttery smoke wafting to the open window. She crossed the room and pulled out the drawer bringing into sight the empty greasy plate, fork resting meekly on its bosom.

"Stuffing yourself again, huh?" she observed. "But what made you hide the plate?"

With uncommon spirit Faimie pushed Zette away and closed the drawer. "If I get tired of putting the dirty dishes in the sink it's none of your business!"

Zette laughed with more good nature than was common, too. "Well! I'm glad to see you can spunk up a little. Usually you're meeker than skim milk."

Nini, who was Zette's twin, nudged Faimie. Nini was a sly one. Her grin and the digging elbow went with the stories she was famous for telling to sniggering women in corners.

"You girls stop your fussing," Nini said. "We got something to talk over with you, Faimie."

Faimie looked at her sisters with apprehension. No matter how she tried they always out-smarted her. The twins worked like Pa's rabbit hounds. One sister would run Faimie around until she was confused and going in a circle. Then the other sister who had waited back at the starting point had only to pounce upon the quarry coming round again.

Now Zette began with a crafty change of subject. "You ought to take more pride in your looks, Faimie. Your hair slicked back like that makes you peaked as a peeled onion. And, my soul, that dress!"

"It's clean and neat."

"So's a washed dish rag. Next time you go to town to trade, catch up a few hens and take their value out in yard goods. Everything you got is too tight, anyway, now you're getting fat and sloppy as a featherbed. Why, Sara Bee Mason ain't near the heft of you and she's been drinking vinegar for the last six months."

Nini prodded the soft swell of Faimie's hip. "Ain't got a corset on, either. Zette, I bet you she's flung her corsets atop the armoire like women do when they give up even thinking about a man!"

Faimie was indignant. "I always lace up when I go somewheres."

"Put on your stays when you get cleaned up of an afternoon," Zette said. "What if somebody dropped in?"

Faimie was astonished. "Who ever would?"

"You can't never tell. If you'd spruce up some, stop getting hawg fat and let it get around that you're in the notion for a beau—"

Zette had run the rabbit around the circle; now Nini leaped at it. "Carver Leloux wants to come over tonight to set a while with you, Faimie. He's ready to settle down and he told us both that he always felt kind of soft about you."

Faimie stiffened and a startled red began to creep above her collar. Carver Leloux was as old as the twins, fifteen years older than Faimie herself. He was good looking in a trifling kind of way and a mighty poor farmer; always off shining around some woman when he ought to be planting or cultivating. Once when Faimie was twelve he had caught her behind the barn and scared her with his hot eyes and wet mouth and his fumbling. She ran before she rightly knew what he was after. By the time she found out, Carver had took to showing up whenever Nini came home to visit. Right often Faimie saw them coming out of the woods on Nini's way to her house half an hour apart and a half mile separated. As time when on, her brothers let it out that Carver obliged a sight of women that way. Once a husband beat Carver up pretty bad and hung the nickname on him that folks called him behind his back . . . Cowbird Carver, like the bird that laid its eggs in other birds' nests.

Zette didn't wait for Faimie to protest. "He ain't the best catch in the world, Faimie, but you got to remember you ain't, either. It would give you a nice change moving over to Carver's place to live. It's nearer to town and with some of the furniture from here you could fix things up real nice."

Faimie looked at the kitchen that had prisoned her so long. Her feet had trod paths from stove to table, to hand pump, to pantry. Her hands had worn the wood smooth, her setting had bulged the chairs. To get away, maybe she could put up with Carver even. At his house she'd lay a pretty pattern of linoleum and buy a new stove. Maybe have electric lights and a washing machine.

"You never took a natural interest in he-stock," Nini was saying. "Maybe having to do for Pa and the boys was what set you against it. With everybody gone now, it's different."

Nini grinned and elbowed Faimie slyly. "You'll like wedlock once you're broke in to it. And it don't make no great difference who you marry with. One man is about the same as another in bed but if you ain't satisfied you can branch out some, once you're a wife—"

Zette frowned at her twin. "Hush up, Nini! I swear, your man ought to take a strap to you; Now, Faimie, just you keep it in mind that you may not see another chance."

They laced Faimie into her corsets and standing back, nodded their heads at the result. They wound her soft hair back and forth on hairpins and patted it wet with sugar water to set the crimps. They urged Faimie to take a full bath, after she did the milking, with soap to take away the smell of the barn and toilet water sprinkled generously to cover up the soap. Then they went away.

Faimie hurried to finish the chores before dark, not taking time even for supper. She pumped water at the sink and bathed with one eye on the clock. Upstairs she laced herself again pulling the corset strings fiercely tight by the bed post until the clasps creaked with the strain. Her best dress smoothed down over her diminished hips felt voluptuously slender. Unwinding her hair from the curling pins, she dealt inexpertly with the stiff frizzle. She was patting lilac toilet water on a handkerchief with a hairpin lace edge when she heard the car stop and the front gate click.

Carver looked about the same. His eyes were yellow-brown like store-bought whiskey and his hair was combed to a roach. When he said howdy-do he held Faimie's hands and grinned down at her like a hound begging a biscuit. They went to sit in the front parlor, sweltering with windows closed lest the lamp draw the bugs.

Carver said she probably felt the old gentleman's death as a real loss and she said yes, she did. He said Pa was quite a character and started to tell a story and ended it lamely when it became plain it wasn't exactly the kind of thing to tell Pa's daughter. Sweating inside the tight stays, Faimie said it had been right warm for the time of year, hadn't it, and Carver said yes, it was plum unseasonable but days like this were weather breeders and sure to bring a change.

On the settee Faimie pleaded the front breadth of her dress and tried not to look startled when Carver moved over to sit beside her. He cleared his throat and came right to the point.

"Faimie, I reckon you know why I'm here." Carver slid along the smooth horsehair until his thigh pressed against hers and his arm lay behind her shoulders on the carved roses of the settee back. One hand squirmed down to her waist and the other cupped her knee. "It don't seem needful to pretty up the plain facts. The girls said they'd put in a good word for me and I reckon you took it like it was intended or you wouldn't be setting all snuggled up to me here."

Faimie made an inarticulate sound that Carver interpreted as encouraging. His hands grew bolder. Faimie went suddenly cold inside her damp clothes and shrank against the farther end of the settee, but he didn't notice.

"Be a good thing, us getting married," Carver said. "Here I am with some hot natured woman always running after me and here you are with a farm and a big house and needing a man—" His face loosened to a leer and his hands insinuated—"in more ways than one, eh, Faimie? We'll do all right together. I'll tell you something. Your sisters want us to go live at my place when we're married. That's so they can run this place for you and skin off the cream for themselves. But I've been thinking, why should they get their snoots in the trough? If you and me settle right down here,

what can they do except holler? You'll feel right at home being married to me, Faimie, because you'll be at home!"

Carver laughed at his own wit. He slapped Faimie's knee; he nudged Faimie's ribs. On the gust of his mirth, she smelled the sour reek of the drinks he had taken to fortify himself. He couldn't stand me cold sober, Faimie thought dully.

Now he sprang up, dragging her to her feet beside him. "No sense in wasting time, Faimie. I want to take a look at the place, see what kind of shape it's in. I ain't much for setting in parlors." Again the nudging elbow. "I do lots better in other rooms!"

Faimie took him first into the dining room where she had set out refreshments. Carver said he wasn't so much of an eater; he just ate to live and didn't live to eat like some folks. But he stuffed a piece of pound cake in his mouth and chewed and gulped around his words. He said he could see he was getting an A number one cook, but he didn't really savor the velvety, butter-scented texture, Faimie saw dispassionately.

In the kitchen he found everything satisfactory. "Real snug. Won't need to make any changes, will we? Seems like it would be a waste to use any money the old man had in the bank to fix up an old house. I've been thinking we could get a new car and make folks' eyes bug out around here, eh, Faimie?"

When he opened the door to Pa's dark bedroom a cone of yellow lamp light reached across the floor. "This here'll be our bedroom, huh?" He moved between the monstrous shadowy shapes of the furniture and sat down on Pa's bed. He looked back at Faimie in the doorway and patted the place beside him. "Come on, don't be so distant!"

She came reluctantly and allowed him to pull her down beside him. He put an arm around her and patted the bed consideringly.

"We'd better buy some new springs," Carver said. "If these have been on the bedstead ever since your Pa brought home his first woman, they've seen a sight of use." He clasped Faimie then and drew her close one hand low on the small of her back and a knee nudging between her legs. "Faimie, honey, I always did have a craving for you, you know that? Being naturally standoffish and still single I know you wouldn't want to admit you even thought about such things, but you'll soon learn to like it. We're going to get married right off, so there's no sense in waiting. How about it, huh? Let's have a little fun right now, Faimie, what you say?" He muttered urgently. "Let's take off our clothes . . . it'll be lots better and there ain't no hurry. . . ."

Something darted in Faimie's mind, making little trapped hopeless sounds as Carver's hot hand moved under her skirt. It whimpered, trying to believe she would get used to this . . . even like it . . . while Carver pulled and plucked at her clothes and his own. The something hoped as the tight laced corset resisted him, then grew resigned as he found the clasps and her hot flanks billowed from their confinement scenting the dark with her womanhood. Carver's breathing grew ragged and his hands cruel. He made whining sounds and the he-smell was a rank fog around them.

The bed rocked and groaned and Faimie staring up into the dark saw the half-tester above them sway threateningly . . . as it would night after night, year in and year out. The thing in her mind became a screaming rejection.

She arced under him like a broaching fish, beating at his looming, astonished face, prying with her knees. They rolled off the bed to carom from the marble topped dresser to the floor. She threw herself after him. Before he could regain his feet, Faimie bent him into a confused, swearing bundle. He didn't weigh much, she noticed. An old stallion got stringy and lean.

The window was an oblong of lighter gray against the night. Face averted as you get rid of something nasty, she lifted Carver and pitched him through the glass. Then she threw his clothes out after him.

Catching her breath she listened to his noisy progress, like a hound with a can tied to his tail. When the car started in a snarl of gears she smiled briefly. As the breeze flowing through the broken window soothed her hot body she picked up her own garments and spread them on a chair. She held her corset a moment consideringly then wound it into a bundle tied with its strings and flung it to the top of the armoire.

Her nakedness gleaming in the moonlight she went through the kitchen and outdoors. At the woodpile when she picked up the ax she noticed that its shadow was a blotch against her whiteness. Back in Pa's room the first stroke of the ax brought the half-tester down like a falling tree. Crashing into the middle of the bed, its weight folded head and footboards together in a tilted, splintered ruin. Faimie threw the ax onto the snarled springs and wiped her hands on the stained coverlid.

After the whispers and the whimperings, the crashing and curses the silence, voluptuous as velvet, caressed her body. She drew a breath of the now clean air, stretching her arms above her head in a gesture like an exuberant crow.

Faimie's stomach stirred reminding her that she hadn't eaten supper. She went into the kitchen and lit a fire, then set on the skillet. She got out eggs and cream and sugar and butter and the blue bowl. As she began to beat the mixture with a fork the clicking sound spoke to her appetite. Her mouth stirred with sensuous anticipation.

She had plenty of time to fry up a pan of lost bread.

*Myron G. Sandifer*

## Some Psychiatric Observations On Literary Criticism

A psychiatrist's attention cannot fail to be drawn to the frequent use of the psychoanalytic approach in contemporary literary criticism. In spite of its obvious value in many instances, one wonders if it is an unmixed blessing. On the positive side there are certainly those fortunate instances—and indeed, they may represent a majority—in which psychoanalytic concepts have been used with lucidity to achieve a desirable goal. In others, one wonders what was the reviewer's motive in adopting this particular approach.

Without doubt, there is a manner in which the psychoanalytic approach can be used to great advantage in literary criticism. This is the use of psychoanalytic concepts as a body of knowledge. In this sense, it represents information in the same sense as historical or sociological data. Its value is equal to, but neither greater nor less than, any other body of information.

The problem is not whether a character or situation can be described in psychoanalytic terms. In really good literature, I think it always can. It is principally a matter of making an appropriate selection in determining what approach to make. If we think now of historical, sociological and psychoanalytic frames of reference, one can see that one of these might be of greater importance than the other in approaching, say, *Beowulf*, Dickens, or Kafka. Sometimes the psychoanalytic theme will prove to be the most useful one in approaching a particular literary creation. When it is, and when psychoanalysis is used as information, it can be of a very constructive and interesting approach.

There is, however, another use—actually a misuse—of psychoanalysis with reference to literature. It is sometimes used as a way of expressing a subtly supercilious attitude toward a literary work or its author. This attitude is characterized by a bored condescension that the author took so long to say what was so patently obvious from the beginning. The aim of this approach is apparently to show that literature is "nothing but" a burdensome cloak for time-worn psychological processes grown wearisome by their familiarity. The authors of such criticism often appear to be trying, with a particular kind of intellectual narcissism, to show the author why he wrote what he did. Perhaps this is one way of getting "one up" on the unsuspecting author who never dreamed that his creation sprang so brazenly from his mother's bed. This seems not so much a form of literary criticism as gamesmanship. The essential fault of such an approach is one of motivation,

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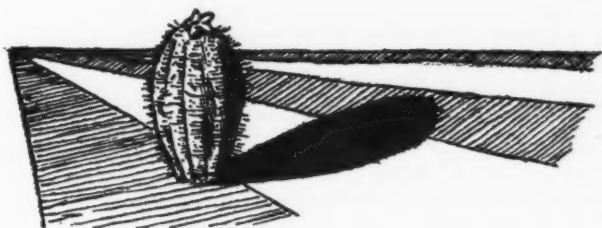
though this is unrecognized by the perpetrators. It is not a matter of accuracy (for some of the analyses are skillfully done) but rather the attempt to say that to grasp the psychological innuendoes is all there is to appreciating good literature.

One might at just this point be in general agreement, but then a prompt response might be, "Why, the psychiatrists are the worst offenders!" This cannot be dismissed as an idle charge. We all know of instances in which a psychiatrist (or associate from an allied field) has delved into literature with the apparent intent of disparaging it. Sometimes there seems actual destructiveness involved; more often one detects the glee of a youthful hunter-after-secrets. Such attitudes are not confined to psychiatrists, but whenever they are found, it is unfortunate.

It is possible, however, to go beyond the rather lame statement that most psychiatrists are not this way and not all people who are this way are psychiatrists. There is a very much more positive relationship between psychiatry and literature. Psychiatry has turned to literature and often found there a more vivid and convincing portrayal of a psychological process or situation than is elsewhere in existence. Literature represents a common experience and is therefore invaluable in transmitting ideas from one person to another. (And incidentally matters are put more explicitly than most psychiatrists are able to do.) But when psychiatrists have used literature to illustrate, they are sometimes misunderstood. It is assumed that they are oblivious to the work as literature and are considering it only as a psychological statement. In actuality, the psychiatrists who are most prone to turn to literature for illustrations are the ones most appreciative of it. They see no conflict between the recognition of psychological lucidity and literary value. (In fact, one might be challenged to demonstrate that the two things do not go together.) Certainly their intent is to compliment and not to disparage, and psychoanalysis owes a debt to literature.

It is of some practical value to keep in mind these general groups and their approach to literature. When psychoanalytic language is used as a vehicle for a thinly veiled air of superiority, the origin of this attitude is to be found, not in psychoanalysis, but in the intent of the individual writer.





## The Fable Of Molly Gordon

*. . . And there was a canvas upon which was drawn the outline of a town. And I saw a leaning house with flowers, a mama, a daddy, a sister, a brother, and then a playmate (one to sleep with and have children by), a tree, the sun, and in the upper left hand corner, a medium-sized god with a broad smile. . . .*

Some children going to school in the cold, winter morning saw the cactus growing in Mrs. Gordon's yard and after school they told their mother and she called her neighbors and they said, Well that proves it. There had been talk that Molly Gordon was going to a psychiatrist on Saturday afternoons and that Mr. Gordon disapproved. Some had said they were just dental appointments, but now the appearance of a small, green cactus growing in an otherwise perfectly acceptable and pleasant yard, was something like a sign that was both crucial and final. There was great sympathy for Oliver Gordon. As Mrs. Edwin said, "The normal things in life you can take, but something like this. . . ." And Julia Penn recalled how nervous Mr. Gordon looked these days, how his nose was pulled down at the corners and how he got in and out of his car like an old man. Mrs. Edwin shifted her packages from one arm to the other. "And right before Christmas, too," she said. And that brought up the things that were to be done—the school program and the parties and the community sing at the Methodist Church. Oh, there were many things to be done and the speculation about Mrs. Oliver Gordon gave way before the annual urgency of the Christmas season.

On the Wednesday before Christmas on Sunday, Molly Gordon was wrapping presents in the kitchen. She was surrounded by great sheets of shining blue and green and silver paper. She was a small woman with almost grey hair now and she looked somewhat like an owl with her small nose curving under at the tip and her large, hazel eyes. Once on a cold night she had stood at the top of the stairs and waited in the dark for Mr. Gordon to finish his glass of warm milk and come up to bed. She was

going to say, "I waited for you," when he came up the stairs. But when he walked into the hall, he flicked on the light suddenly and called up, "You look like an old owl up there, Molly, just like an old owl."

She wished she were wrapping presents for children and not for Mr. Gordon's business partners. And the moment she thought about children she had to struggle to her feet and move about the room. She reheated the coffee and drank it black, sipping slowly and looking out of the window. It was raining and the long, silver lines hit against the pane with something like a fury and ran wasted down the glass. It was still there—the desire. Now, it was not the gentle wish she had known before. She no longer imagined the round, sweet forms of children playing on the floor, nor did she ever hold her arms in the shape of a child at her breast. Now it was not like that anymore. Not since November had it been that way. Now it was not children she desired, but childbirth. She wanted the pain and the terror, the smell of blood and the dark child tearing through her body for birth and causing her to scream and contort her face in anguish. She went to visit young Mrs. Barkley a week or so after her child was born and she had asked, "Was it painful?" and Mrs. Barkley had said, "Yes," somehow in the wrong way, and had immediately shown her a pair of pink ruffled diapers someone had brought the baby. She supposed Mrs. Barkley must have thought it queer, must have told her friends about it, for a day or two after that the preacher's wife, Mrs. Edwin, had come to see her and with no preface had said, "We mustn't let ourselves get morbid, Mrs. Gordon."

Actually, Mr. Gordon was right, she *was* causing talk. He had, of course, anticipated it, as he said, when Molly had tried to tell him what it was that had happened to her. She remembered the day—a lovely, November day—and she had been to the dentist in the city and was coming home on the bus. And then it had happened. When the bus turned the corner into town, she was filled with a sharp and quick awareness. She had an almost mystical experience. A phrase that she could not immediately identify drummed through her mind with an intensity that made her body shake—"Because you are neither cold nor hot. . . ." And when she looked up, through the front window of the bus, she saw the town before her in a way she had never seen it before: as an expression of the collective personality, as an expression of her husband, and of herself. Not too ugly and not too beautiful, not too dumb and not too smart, not too bad, but not too good, either. She thought at once of those fortresses that the early settlers built for themselves and lived within, to keep out the strange and the wild. And then she thought, and it whispered inside her and would not be silenced, "In gaining safety, I have forfeited life." Then it was over and she felt herself falling away from that vividness and into a kind of stillness of the heart. Only she felt thankful and she said to herself, "I have been given a chance to live."

All the rest of that afternoon, everywhere she went was showered with a brightness—like a landscape seen by a person who has looked too long at the sun. But it was not until late that night in bed, in the darkness, that she tried to share the experience with her husband. Mr. Gordon had yawned

and listened and yawned and at last he reached his hand out, missed his mark, and stuck his finger in her eye, trying to pat her on the head. "You've missed having children, Molly," he said, "that's your whole trouble." Molly had thought that was an excuse, an easy excuse, and she tried again to explain to him, but already he had begun to snore.

It was in the days that followed that Molly had felt the difference. It began when she was alone. There had not been a great deal that Molly did when she was alone—she did not often desire to be alone—but on the day after her trip to the dentist, she was cleaning the bathroom when she suddenly felt she must speak aloud, must assert something. She gazed out of the little window above the tub and said, "Forever and ever, Amen," and it was as though she had come to some kind of peace with herself, so that she could smile when she began cleaning again. That night the Weekly Bridge Club met at their house and while they were all engrossed in bidding, Molly had laughed and blurted out, "I don't like games." Mr. and Mrs. Penn had looked so shocked and offended and Mr. Gordon had said, "Why Molly, you love to play bridge, you know you do." And for the first time in her life Molly had done a completely ungracious thing. She had risen, smiling, from her chair and had gone in the kitchen to get the refreshments an hour before time. Mr. Gordon had made some awkward excuse for her and the Penns had left immediately after they had eaten. Later that night, even under the force of Mr. Gordon's displeasure, Molly had only stopped brushing her hair long enough to say, "There is something that is important."

During the week that followed, she did not know her own mind, she was so full of thoughts; and at night she pulled down the dusty, old books Mr. Gordon's father had left them and read until her eyes ached and the color was high in her cheeks. She began going to the city on Saturdays and sometimes she would spend the whole day in the public library and sometimes she would just walk among the crowds and look hard at the faces.

At the Senior Ladies Mission Society, that met on Tuesdays from three to five, she forgot to take the minutes and when they called on her to read them back, she could only say, "I didn't take them." She had sat there the entire time wishing she had enormous buck teeth and could laugh crazily into the midst of their earnestness or that she had black hair, parted in the middle and pulled severely back, and that she could say, in a quiet voice, "There *are* values."

On the night of the Town Club's annual barbecue, Mr. Gordon had put his foot down. They were driving home in silence, when Molly said, "This is a miserable town," and Mr. Gordon had thought this was a good chance to get things straight, so he said, in a conversational voice, "Now Molly, what are you saying? This is a fine town we live in; we've always thought that, you and I. Our people are civic-minded and church-minded, we've got a good school, we're cultured, we've made the best friends anybody could want. And it's a happy town, we're happy people." And Molly replied, almost too low for Mr. Gordon to hear, and without a trace of rancor in her voice, "Let's all join hands and dance around the mulberry bush,

spitting out blood and venom, and shouting, "We're so happy, We're all so happy." Mr. Gordon had stopped the car in the middle of the road and put his head down on the steering wheel, almost whimpering, and asking what had he done to deserve this and begging her please, please to talk with Mr. Edwin or somebody or to do something, please. Molly had been thinking that Mr. Gordon sounded like a bulbous frog with indigestion, but when he finished, she said, "I'm sorry," and some of the brightness was gone. Then she promised to talk with the preacher the next morning. To be sure she would do it, Mr. Gordon had called the Edwins at 11:00 and gotten them out of bed to ask Mr. Edwin if he would talk with Molly.

Saturday morning, Molly walked into Mr. Edwin's office and he pulled out a chair for her and commented on the fact that not many people ever asked him to talk with them. He said he had always wanted people to tell him their troubles, but they never did. Molly drew in a long breath and told him the story she had told Mr. Gordon. She had felt uncomfortable doing it—it was like pretending to be sick when she wasn't or admitting a guilt which she didn't feel. Mr. Edwin nodded his head several times and waited until he was sure that she had finished before he spoke. Everything was still in the small study and the light shone palely through the stained glass window. A bird lighted on the window sill and began to chirp insistently. Mr. Edwin had asked her if she had prayed about it and she said she had not and he recited to her four verses of a well-known hymn. Molly watched the bird fly away and lose himself in a blue stretch of sky. She rose slowly and thanked the preacher and got almost to the door before she turned to him and said, "I think, Mr. Edwin, that if God is dead, He died of boredom." And after she got home and had started lunch, she remembered a sentence, from a book she had glanced through at the library, that made her tremble. "Socrates and Jesus," it had said, "were both killed by the status quo." That had been last Saturday and on Sunday at church Mr. Edwin had not looked at her at all.

The rain had stopped. Molly Gordon poured out the rest of the coffee and sat back down on the floor. She looked at the clock and as she did the front door banged and Mr. Gordon came stamping into the kitchen. He appeared agitated.

"Molly, this is it. What in the world are you thinking of? Why in the name of Heaven would you do such a thing?"

She caught hold to a chair, getting up, and thought hard.

"I don't know what you're talking about Oliver."

Mr. Gordon caught her arm and led the way through the hall to the front door.

"Look out there."

Molly looked out on the porch and in the yard and saw nothing. She turned a blank face to Mr. Gordon and he opened the door and led her out onto the wet ground. In the middle of their yard, he stopped and pointed to a small, green plant. Molly stooped down and looked closely at the plant.

"What is it?" she asked.

Mr. Gordon was red-faced. "This morning at the office John came in

and asked me what was this about your planting the yard with cactus plants. I said I never heard of such a thing. I said it wasn't true. And I come home and here in the middle of the yard you have planted a cactus. Now Molly," he shook his head frantically, "I haven't said much to you, I've been patient through all this business of saying foolish things and treating our friends like strangers, but I tell you, a thing like this doesn't look right," Mr. Gordon bit at his words as he released them, "if you want to know the truth, it looks like something a crazy woman would do."

Molly looked down at the cactus. "I know nothing about this plant. As far as I know it just . . . sprung up."

She started back for the house with Mr. Gordon following close. When they got inside, Mr. Gordon sank down on the sofa and slapped at his forehead with both hands.

"I just don't know what to do," he said like a question, "I just don't know what to do. You've just been acting so queer and all. My friends . . . Mr. Edwin . . . I can't work, I can't sleep. And I hear rumors about my own wife and now I come home and find a cactus in my front yard."

Molly ran a finger around the top of the green lamp. She felt she might laugh.

"Oliver," she began, "I don't know what to say, either. I . . . I've tried to talk with you, but. . . ." She looked out at the front yard. "Cactus plants can't even live in this climate," she said a little angrily, "there's not enough rain."

Mr. Gordon stood up as quickly as though he had been surrounded by a band of murderers.

"Live? It's not going to get a chance to live. I'm going to pull it up right now, roots and all." And he started for the door, but Molly suddenly held her hand out and frowned and said, "No. You leave it there. Let's see if it'll bloom."

Mr. Gordon couldn't eat any supper and he went right on up to bed, and when Molly came up he was still awake and said he felt like his head was more than half the size of his body. Molly had been sleeping well, but she stayed awake, too, watching the familiar pattern of light and dark on the walls and wondering, "What difference does it make if you have a cactus in your front yard," and then was a little ashamed at herself for even thinking about it.

All the next day and the one following that Mr. Gordon walked pidgeon-toed around the house, the way he always did when he felt bad. He was taking the three days before Christmas as a part of his vacation. At meals he pushed his food around carefully on his plate and stared at it sadly. He would not look directly at Molly though she felt that he watched her constantly. If she tried to make talk, he would answer glumly and say, "I guess so." The shadow of his depression grew over her until on his second day at home, Molly locked herself in the bathroom and turned on the faucets so that he would not hear her crying. She spoke aloud again to the window above the tub, "Is it worth it? Is it worth it? Is it worth it? Is it worth it?" She wanted to ask somebody if it were ever true that a person

must live only in relation to himself and perhaps God, yes, perhaps God, but there was no one to ask.

That night Mr. Gordon did not wait for her to say she was not going to the Weekly Bridge Club. He got up very painfully from the supper table and put on his coat and didn't bother to smooth the collar down. She thought that it was shabby and had holes at the elbows.

All day Christmas Eve there was nothing to do. Mr. Gordon went to his office early that morning and just left his presents there for the party. He didn't wait to get the ones that were for him, but came directly back home and sat around in one room or another, looking as though there were nothing left for him, as though he had no refuge. Molly sat up in the bedroom with a book open on her lap. She was staring at the night table upon which Mr. Gordon had left his Bible. The print of his hand was outlined on the back of it and part of the gold lettering of his name shone where his thumb had been. She couldn't remember the last time she had seen it. She closed the book on her lap and got up and walked downstairs. Mr. Gordon was slumped down in his leather chair and his eyes were red from staring into the fire. Molly sat down opposite him. She cleared her throat and spoke gravely.

"Oliver, I know how you feel. You feel like you want to go home, and there's no place to go."

That was not the way Mr. Gordon felt. He winced and looked out through the window like a lost man.

"Nobody wants to cause trouble. I don't want to be a problem for you," Molly said.

Mr. Gordon drew his nose down at the sides like a child about to cry. He opened his mouth as if he might say something, but gasped instead as though in great pain. Molly began to pull vigorously at a loose thread on the arm of the chair.

"Let's talk, Oliver," her voice was a little loud, "I'll try to tell you what I am feeling. I want you to understand. I think if you understand, if you would try, we could. . . ."

"I just can't take any more," Mr. Gordon said. "I just can't do it. My nerves won't stand it."

When he stopped suddenly, Molly felt the room grow still, felt the air grow close and heavy around her, was conscious of the way the rocking chair tilted back and the way the sofa squatted on the floor. The room was waiting, waiting for something to happen, waiting for her to do something.

"All right Oliver, all right," she said. "We won't talk about it. We won't talk about it ever again."

That night Molly brought a tray with oyster soup and coffee on it for them to eat by the fire in the living room. They had gotten almost through when there was suddenly the sound of feet outside and then male and female voices blended and they heard "Joy to the world, the Lord has come." Mr. Gordon made no move to get up. He looked at her, half fearfully, as though he thought she might throw an egg or something at the carolers. Molly pressed the palms of her hands against her eyes for a moment



and then went to the door. There were the Penns and the Edwins and John West and the Sullivans. They had presents under their arms and Mrs. Edwin was carrying a big plate covered with a napkin. While they were singing, Molly stood there holding the door open and Mr. Gordon came up and stood behind her. She looked at their faces. Mr. Edwin looked forgiving and the Penns looked hopeful and John West was watchful. She turned a little toward Mr. Gordon and something like a tear was starting in his eye. He looked back at her and his face said, See now, see, see what kind of people these are. Molly's hand tightened on the knob.

"Well come in," she said with a crooked kind of smile, "come on in."

They filled the living room with singing and laughter and Mrs. Edwin cut big slices of fruit cake. Molly got plates for them all in the kitchen and Mr. Gordon followed her back with a glowing face and said he couldn't speak he was so full.

"This is the spirit of Christmas, Molly," he said, as though they had been arguing about it. "I'm so grateful for my friends, so grateful." He walked back into the living room and she heard him blowing his nose.

She leaned against the sink and clasped her hands tightly together and shook her head like a person trying to stay awake.

"How ugly of them," she whispered.

When she came into the living room, Julia Penn got up and helped her give out the plates. Mr. Gordon and John West and the preacher were singing, "We Three Kings of Orient Are."

"Look Molly," Julia Penn spoke breathlessly, "I know next week is your time to have the Bridge Club, but Charlie's family are descending upon us tomorrow and his mother always leaves enough food for a year. So why don't we just have it at my house next time and get rid of some of that food."

Gratitude, Molly thought, and its sound was harsh . . . gratitude. Mr. Gordon had left the group and was coming toward them.

"All right, Julia," Molly said, "that will be fine," adding in a thin voice, "We'd love to."

It was late when Molly and Mr. Gordon were getting ready to go to bed. Mr. Gordon was still humming to himself and he moved about the room with a light step. Molly went in to the bathroom to wash her face. She waited a moment in the darkness before she turned on the light.

"What could I have done?" she said. "What did you want me to do?"

While she was soaping her face, she looked in the mirror and gave a small cry which grew into a soap bubble and burst before her eyes.

Mr. Gordon called to her before she got to the door of their room.

"Molly, will you do me a favor," he said, "will you go downstairs and look in my right hand coat pocket and get the change in it before I forget about it. It's for the Christmas offering."

Molly had turned at the stairs and gone on down while he was talking. She walked through the living room and felt her way to the closet, then felt for Mr. Gordon's coat. The coins were hard and cold in her hand. She went back upstairs and put them down carefully on the dresser and stayed there



for a minute, feeling the small ridges with her fingers.

She took off her slippers, letting them fall on the floor with a thud and got into bed.

"We can't get rid of it," she said.

"What? What?" Mr. Gordon was asleep, exhausted. He began to snore again.

"The money that Judas collected," she said.

The Penns stopped long enough after church to tell Mrs. Edwin that they couldn't get to speak to the preacher and that it was a fine sermon, and Mrs. Edwin blushed and said, "Thank you." And all those people who could not get to the front came by and spoke to Mrs. Edwin and she said the same words so many times, that when a small boy came up and said, "Christmas is wonderful," Mrs. Edwin said, "Thank you," and blushed. She had to wait fifteen minutes for Mr. Edwin to get through speaking to people, then they picked up John West who was having dinner with them. All the Edwin children called John West, Uncle John, and while they were eating together, he spoke up and said it was a pity that Gordons had never had any children. Not so much for Oliver's sake, as he pointed out, but for Mrs. Gordon's. And then Mrs. Edwin said, "Well why don't we all go over to the Gordons' when we finish and the children can show their presents." So after dinner they all walked around to the Gordons' and while Mr. Edwin was knocking on the door, John West suddenly remembered something and looked back over the front yard, but he saw nothing at all out of the ordinary. Certainly he did not see the green plant, pulled up and thrown over in the brush, with its white blossom that lay on one side and fluttered a little in the wind, like a flag.

## Squirrels

Of all the creatures that are tied to earth  
squirrels are the most lighthearted.  
Birds fly  
so they don't count of course.  
Besides, birds are either finding worms  
or sitting somewhere singing in a tree.  
Trees come too easily for them.  
When they do fly they seem to be going places.  
But squirrels like to try out every branch  
and look at one another around trunks  
just for the heck.  
They make the most of trees.

*KNUTE SKINNER, a graduate student at the State University of Iowa and a member of Paul Engle's Writers' Workshop, has appeared in The New Republic, Shenandoah, Folio, Beloit, and other journals.*

## Lips Like Red Valentine Hearts

Jason said he married me because I sparkled better than a jug of hard apple cider. Jason said my lips were like red valentine hearts, and that my butt struck straight out back, wiggley as a duck's tail. Jason gave me a last name, and he never cared a tad that I didn't even know who my Daddy was.

Two years ago last May when we buried Jason, I cussed the Lord. As well as everybody else. I never woulda' thought that day that Brother Ben Hall and his wife Ester would change my way of thinking.

Everything was so hazy-like except the way Jason looked in the coffin—so still and quiet. I'd wanted to bury him in his wool plaid jacket—the one he loved so good, but his Daddy rushed over to Simm's Mercantile right after it happened, and bought him a blue serge suit that made him look like a town-going Methodist. I remember they gave me some dope-pills just before the funeral, but it didn't keep me from screeching and shaking like a scalded coon-dog every time I thought how I'd never see Jason again in his red shirt with the silver buttons and the tight jeans that I'd washed till they were plum thready. Or pacing back and forth when things bothered him, restless as a tabby cat in heat.

Brother Ben Hall, the new young preacher at Mt. Zion, stood up there over the casket taking on about Jason's soul, and how he hoped he was saved before he went. Once he pounded the rostrum and started yelling about Hell. I said back, "Shut up, damn you, what do you know about his soul and where it flew to?"

Jason's Ma tugged at my elbow. "Hush, Ruby," she said.

"I won't hush," I said. "The Lord played a Hell trick—a hell . . ."

Jason's Daddy was on my other side. He grabbed at my other arm hard. "Shet up—before the Lord strikes you dead."

"I wisht he would." I shook my arm free, and I reckon it's a good thing the undertaker came just then to lead us out to the cars or I don't know what I'da done.

It was a few days later that I met Ester Hall. I was sitting on the side-porch with Jason's Ma staring out at the road when the car pulled up, and a woman got out and walked up to the steps. She wobbled with her shoulders tilted back and her legs spread out the way women do when their time is just

about come, and she had purple circles under her eyes and not a speck of lipstick on, or even powder. Her whole face was clean and shiny as a water glass washed in ivory snow. "Ruby," she said, "I'm Ester Hall—the new preacher's wife."

"You're the last person I want to see," I said. "You and that Holy Roller out there in the car."

"Ruby," she said. "We want to help you."

"I don't need help from no preacher."

Jason's Ma shook her head. "Ruby needs the Lord's help. Won't you and Brother Hall come in and set a while?"

Ester looked toward the car. "We thought maybe Ruby would go home with us for a while."

"I'm staying right here," I said.

Jason's Ma turned to me. "Go on, Ruby."

I started to say no, but just then Jason's Daddy came around the house. "I'll study about going," I said. No preacher could ever be worse than Jason's Daddy when he got started.

Ester smiled at me. "I made a green-apple pie." Her voice was soft and I knew it would sound pretty singing.

I got up. "I'll go." I left Jason's Ma and Daddy setting there and I knew in their hearts they couldn't see why it wasn't me took instead of Jason. But they'd never say it out loud. The Lord might strike them dead.

The little parsonage Ester lived in had been needing some paint for a long spell, and the screens on the back porch had big holes in them. But when we walked in her kitchen, I felt right at home. She'd made some shelves out of orange crates, and there were curtains sewed out of unbleached domestic, and dyed a pretty light blue. The old coal oil stove was wiped whistle-clean, and she'd put a piece of checked oilcloth over the table that Mrs. Zeb Rust had given the church after she'd used it ten years in her back-yard at hog killing time. "The Mt. Zion folks oughta' give you some new furniture," I said.

Brother Ben Hall had followed us in. "Sister Ruby," he said, "We don't live for the flesh. The Lord sends us hardships because he knows they're good for the soul." He looked to Ester. "Where's the loaf bread you made for Mrs. Dobbs?" Ester handed him the bread wrapped in a clean cotton towel. He went out the back door.

"Poor Mrs. Dobbs," Ester said. "She can't hang on much longer."

"Her children are all grown—why should she?" I was thinking of Jason. "Why ought she live to see a hundred, with Jason took before he's

old enough to vote?"

Ester spoke. I expected her to preach, and I sat up straighter. She said, "How old are you, Ruby?"

"I'm seventeen—he was twenty."

"What was he like?"

"He was tall and he had hair Indian-black, and dark eyes that could look at me and make me want to rise right up and fly over the fence. But his eyes could cut like a deer-knife too." I started to cry. "A deer-knife . . ."

"What really happened that night?" Ester said.

"It wasn't like they told it." I wanted her to believe me. "He was good and kind. Jason wasn't bad. He just couldn't stand it to hear anyone call me a bastard." I looked at the floor. "He wasn't used to it—like I was."

"It might help you to talk about it."

"That's all there was to it," I said. "The fight was over me. Over me, and now Jason's dead with a deer-knife in his heart." I didn't look at Ester. "The Lord played a Hell trick . . ."

"I'm going to pray for you." Ester got up. "But right now, I'll draw you a fresh dipper of water."

"You set down." Ester looked tired. I grabbed the water bucket. "I'll get it." As I turned the well crank, the preacher drove up, but he let me carry the bucket in. (I reckon he was studying old Mrs. Dobbs and how she wasn't too long for this world, or rehearsing his prayer for next Sunday. The bucket was right heavy.)

Soon after that, I got a job spinning at the cotton mill, and in my spare time I saw Ester often. I'd go over and help her with her housework, and when I got my first paycheck, I bought her a soft blue baby blanket.

I knocked on the door, and Brother Ben Hall said come in. He was setting in the kitchen eating a biscuit with jam on it.

"Where is Ester?" I said.

"Set down," he said. "She'll be right back, and besides I been wantin' to speak with you."

I sat down. "I bought Ester a baby blanket—a blue one. Jason's Ma said it would be a boy the way her stomach looks from the side angle." I stopped, shame-faced, hearing what I'd said to Brother Ben Hall, there in the kitchen all alone with him.

"Sister Ruby," Brother Ben Hall's blue eyes were piercing through me. "The Lord don't like a brazen woman. You got to learn that, Sister Ruby."

"I'm sorry. I didn't aim to talk so direct."

"And Sister Ruby." Brother Ben Hall put his hand on my wrist, and

left it there gently. "Do you think the Lord likes that bright red paint you put on your lips?"

I was sure glad that Ester came in right then, and that Brother Ben Hall got up and said he reckoned he'd better get over to the church, and do a mite of dusting, so everybody wouldn't sneeze all through the Wednesday night prayer meeting.

I held the package out to Ester. "It's for the baby."

Ester rubbed her fingers over the blanket. "It's beautiful—and soft. I never had anything like this for the others."

"The others?"

Tears came in Ester's eyes. "The first two were called Home, but the Lord is good."

"Yes, he is," I said. I looked at Ester's lit-up face. It was thin except for her swollen eyes, but even with her bloodless lips, and her white cheeks, she reminded me of a calla lily in the spring.

The baby came the next day. He weighed ten pounds, and Ester brought him home from the hospital and started doing her work the very next day. I helped her when I could, but several times I found her carrying wash-water, or lifting the heavy laundry basket.

"You shouldn't oughta' do that," I said.

Preacher Ben Hall looked at me. "The virtuous woman seeketh wool and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands."

"That's right Ben," Ester said. "Ruby doesn't understand."

Brother Ben Hall motioned me to sit down. "The Bible says favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain. Think on this, Ruby."

"Brother Ben, I'm trying to live right. I'm trying."

Brother Ben Hall looked at me again, and his eyes were accusing. "The sins of your parents have been visited on you, Ruby. You're loud and stubborn, and you got to try harder to be the Lord's servant."

"I'll try harder," I said. I didn't want that Brother Ben Hall should look at me that way again.

When little Benjamin was three months old, Ester was expecting again. She looked worse this time, almost old. I decided I had to do something for her, so one day when Brother Ben Hall was at a preacher's convention, I got her to let Jason's Ma keep Benjamin while she came in to town to spend the day with me at my boarding place.

Ester stood looking around my room. I'd bought a pretty yellow chenille spread for the bed, and had doilies all over that Jason's Ma had crocheted for Jason and me, and I even had a slipper chair. "You like it?" I said.

"It's sure nice." Ester almost fell into the slipper chair.

"You puny, Ester?"

"I just felt dizzy." Ester was brushing at her forehead with the back of her hand.

"I was gonna' treat you to a meal at the cafe, but you better see the doctor first."

"Oh, no," Ester said. "Ben says I don't have faith—that's why I feel sick." Ester was picking at her hair. "But I do."

"What you need," I said, "is some fun. Stuck out there all the time, washing and all—you're just worn out." I started putting on my lipstick.

Ester watched me. "It's just like you said Jason used to tell you." Ester got up. "You do have lips like red valentine hearts."

"I wonder how you'd look with lipstick on?" I said.

Ester came over to the dresser. She picked up my lipstick, put some on. She stood a long time, staring in the mirror, and a funny look came in her eyes.

"Why, you're purely pretty," I said.

Ester started crying. "Beauty is vain." She rubbed off her lips, and washed them with soap. I never did cheer her up that day.

Ester's second baby weighed eleven pounds. I went out to see her and she looked paler than the long-sleeved white flannel gown she was wearing. Brother Ben Hall was sitting beside her, telling her she'd be up in the morning—he knew she would, if she just had faith. Ester looked at him, and her heart was in her eyes, and she said yes if you say so Ben.

I showed her the quilt Jason's Ma and I had made for the new baby—we'd appliqued little elephants all over it, and I handed her a bottle of perfume I'd picked up at the retail drug store. She handed the perfume to Brother Ben, and he got up and put it in a dresser drawer, then she said, "The quilt is so pretty. Can't we wrap him in it, Ben?"

Brother Ben Hall took the quilt. He stared at it a minute, then stared at Ester, and I thought he was going to say yes, but then he put it in the box under the bed where Ester kept the blue blanket I'd given her before, and all the time the baby was wrapped in an old faded thing that looked like it had been used for the last two generations. Brother Ben said, "This is the Lord's child, and he doesn't need to start out his life in fancy wrappings."

Ester said, and her voice didn't sound like it would sound so good singing anymore, "I'll be up to-morrow, Ruby. Up, to-morrow." And I said yes, and wished there was something I could do for her, and for Brother Ben Hall



too. He was looking like he was gonna' pray, but for once couldn't think of anything to say.

Ester did get up the next day—she was right about that. They called me at work. "Ester Hall has bled to death." They found her on the floor beside a broken perfume bottle, and her hair smelled like lilacs. The baby was on the bed, and she'd wrapped him in the soft blue blanket, and covered his feet with the quilt with the little elephants on it.

The coffin was lined with light blue taffeta. Brother Ben Hall insisted on that, and so I give him credit. I stood there, and looked at Ester. She didn't seem a day over eighteen—with all the lines worked out of her face by the undertakers. But like Jason, she was twenty. "Dear Lord," I said, "thank you for letting me know her." "But Lord," I said, "I wish she could have had some of the good things I've had—like being with someone like Jason. Having someone like Jason even for a little while." I bit my lip to keep from crying. I'd been eating my lipstick off all afternoon.

Someone came up behind me. It was Brother Ben Hall. "I tried to curb her worldliness. The Lord knows I tried." Brother Ben Hall's words sounded like a struggle. "And now, she's doomed to the fires of Hell."

"Oh no," I whispered.

"Ruby," Brother Ben Hall moved closer to me. "Ruby," Brother Ben Hall said, "I see you've wiped all the paint off your lips. You look less deceitful and vain, Ruby." Brother Ben Hall's hand was on my arm.

"Oh no," I said. "Oh no." And I ran from the room.

In the back of the house, I took out the little gold compact that Jason had given me. I looked at my eyes—the eyes that cried for Jason—for Ester—for Ester's two babies.

Then I looked at my lips. They were cotton-pale, and chapped. I reached for my lipstick—started painting it on.

"Lips like valentine hearts," I said. "Lips like red valentine hearts."

## Milton's Fruits

Were wrought to never rot  
Inside their burnished skins  
Picking up the light like globes  
To ornament that one season  
(Nor the leaves fall either)  
Plumped to make us taste  
In the mind's clean mouth  
Something that would remind us  
Of our own hot orchard  
But pressed against eternal teeth  
Dripping and perfect  
His fruits too imaginable  
Until the bite of envy  
Clamps our genuine tongues  
So hurt we will not hear  
Even the crickets of Eden.

## In Review

Doris Betts, *Tall Houses in Winter*. New York: G. P. Putnam's, Inc., 1957.

Upon publication of Mrs. Betts' collection of short stories, *The Gentle Insurrection*, she was deservedly called one of the most promising young talents to show itself in years. This, her first novel, is perhaps a short story, written at too great length and without enough thought.

One may ponder why the publishers say on the dust jacket that Mrs. Betts has "performed the rare feat for a woman novelist of getting inside a male character . . ." For she does not quite get inside her protagonist. She seeks to offer him as a sane, honest and sensitive man, who has performed rather a rare feat himself in escaping from the limited background of a small Southern town to be a college professor in New England. Back he is coming, to the boyhood home he despises, there to delay, somehow, needed surgery for cancer.

Home is not much of an environment in which to contemplate such a crisis with equanimity; for he grew up hating his sister Asa and his brother Avery, and once conducted a fiercely passionate love affair with his brother's wife Jessica. Jessica is dead now, and so is Avery. Jessica's son is there, and the cancer-ridden professor comes to ask himself furiously if this supposed nephew is not his son, also.

The best-drawn characters, despite what the dust jacket says, are women. The fascinatingly cruel and unlovely Asa, the wryly tender Negro housekeeper Lady Malveena and, in a flashback, the adulterous sister-in-law Jessica—all live and, in their various ways, invite sympathy because they are vivid and understandable. For Ryan, the returning exile who cannot face the surgeon's knife, there is less excuse. It is hard to accept him as rebellious when he is only querulous, philosophical when he is only glib, tender when he is only thin-skinned.

Mrs. Betts almost brings it off. There is real vitality, though hardly healthy vitality, in the hole-in-corner loves of

Ryan and Jessica. Now and then, the reader hopes that somehow sins will be forgiven, pains assuaged, dreams fulfilled. And the Southern town and some of the people in it are clearly, artfully made recognizable to anyone who has lived in the South. But, at the last, Ryan cannot quite accept or rescue the child he almost knows is his, nor is he quite ready to be mature and sensible and go through with a life-or-death operation for cancer.

This does not sound like the description of a fine novel. Maybe Mrs. Betts' next novel will be fine. She has youth and energy, and the sort of skilful word-workmanship that sounds swift and effortless because it has been achieved with so much conscious and resolute effort. She is still one of the most promising young talents to show itself in years.

Manly Wade Wellman

John Ehle, *Move Over, Mountain*. New York: Morrow, 1957.

The setting of John Ehle's extraordinary first novel is Leafwood, eleven miles from Durham, twenty-five from Raleigh. In short, it is Chapel Hill but with a tremendous difference: there is no University.

A university would be out of place in *Move Over, Mountain*, the story of a sort of everyday Negro fellow before the days of the Desegregation Decision. Perhaps "everyday" is too casual a word to apply to Jordan Cummings; his ambition places him several notches above the general run. But, at least, it seems to be the author's intent that Jordan symbolize a forward step in the Negro's maturation. Jordan reflects, "Maybe a family is like a baby—living in the dark for the time, getting its body formed, its strength. Maybe that was true of the whole Negro race, as he knew it—trying to be safe as its body formed so that it would be strong for the birth . . . White man lived in the world, most likely, Negro in a dream, as if he wasn't born yet. Maybe not ready to be born . . . But, Lord, got to move

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Mr. Ehle's novel has to do with Jordan's moving along, taking his wife Annie with him, and their sons Fletcher and Harris. The book opens at the coal yard where strong, hard-working, easy-to-get-mad-and-fight Jordan is employed. He loses his job, is rehired, then makes a stab at independence. With the help of Jake, an ex-prizefighter and operator of a beer hall, he buys a taxicab and plans for expansion. All might have gone smoothly, if brother Bryant, wealthy and sassy, had not returned to Leafwood from the North. Bryant's flaw is that he must own and possess everything he loves, including Jordan's family. In spite of the attractions offered, Jordan asserts his integrity and refuses to live in Bryant's new house. Tin Top—"clinging, as it did, to the red hills, huddled beneath twisting lines of telephone poles, shrouded down in the smoke of cookstoves"—is better than the personal forfeiture represented by moving to the fashionable Negro residential area.

From then on, Bryant is determined to force Jordan into subservience. Jake's beer hall is taken from him, a new taxi company threatens Jordan's small-potato operation, and even personal violence is resorted to. That Jordan, even fumbling along without the aid of an articulate philosophy and minus the consolation of a defined objective except to beat Bryant, never gives in—this provides the rest of the story.

As the pages turn, there are individual scenes which sparkle: Bryant's housewarming party, when the educated Negroes come over from Durham and Raleigh and highballs are served; dinner at "The Marlin," a high-class Negro restaurant in Durham, where beefsteak costs four dollars and where little bits of melon are colored green and purple and cut into balls by a "special tool"; the oyster roast at the Methodist Church, where Jordan had difficulty opening the shells which Fletcher learned fast how to handle.

These touches and the intimate scenes in Jordan's home show how well Mr. Ehle has caught the spirit of the Negro, who is here portrayed as a social human being rather than as a racial problem. The

white world seldom intervenes. Though well aware of his own color, Jordan nevertheless is not fighting for his spot on the earth as a Negro, merely his spot as a person.

Like any man, he has his dream. He is always thinking of the shining, beckoning North. To him, it is the happy country, where opportunities are vast. But when the time comes to go, he is like most men who assess the reality of the here and now. His son Harris says, "I'm going to be a taxicab man. Goin' to be like you. And if you go away and—" The shining North would have to wait, perhaps forever. With words like those from one's son, Jordan felt his bigness so great that even the mountain would have to move over to make room for him.

Mr. Ehle's style is deceiving. It is so simple that the reader's early wish is for more embellishment. But the artist knows whereof he works. The straightforward, almost naive composition matches the people and the action in the book. This is a believable story of rather uncomplicated folk, written on classic lines. In this first novel, Mr. Ehle has moved over one mountain himself.

Richard Walser

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Two years ago John Ehle suggested that it might be possible to set up an inter-departmental honors group where young writers might move a little closer to the future they were eying. They might read their manuscripts to each other and to teachers who were combining writing with teaching. The students could use these honors meetings as a sounding board for their own work — novels, short stories, plays or television scripts. Perhaps, John Ehle suggested, the young writers in working together could find a home on the Chapel Hill campus.

Since then, the Honors Group in Writing has come into being. Tom Patterson came to it from Dramatic Art, Max Steele and I came from the English Department, and John Ehle from Radio, Motion Pictures, and Television. Since then, John Ehle has written *Move Over, Mountain*, a novel William Morrow published on April 15 which is being reviewed in this issue of the *Quarterly* by Richard Walser.

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of State College. Since then, all of us who work with John Ehle have been looking forward to the appearance of his first novel.

The manuscript of *Move Over, Mountain* came into my office more than a year ago giving me the hope of snaring it for G. P. Putnam's Sons for whom I was scouting at that time. After coming to know the main character, Jordan Cummings, and moving with him through his struggle that becomes the reader's own struggle, I had the book sent to the Putnam editors. They liked it enough to write almost at once that they too felt this to be a warm, moving novel, but they did want changes.

Putman's never had a chance to see the changes for by that time Frances Phillips of William Morrow had got word of the book through her connections here in Chapel Hill. When she wrote that Rogers Terrell, who is John Ehle's agent, had submitted the book to her, I felt sad to have missed out but pleased that Miss Phillips was interested. Another note came from Frances, very enthusiastic, with word of a contract and of publication plans. "We have got ourselves a writer, which is the most important thing of all," she said.

Like the people who work in our honors class, John Ehle's book had found a home.

Jessie Rehder

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Robert A. Lively, *Fiction Fights the Civil War*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1957.

Mention the historical novel to the serious literary critic and you're sure to be rewarded with a condescending smile, shaped with just a trifle of sneer. Ask him for an opinion, and he will give you something like, "Oh, I suppose it had its day. Even so, who reads Scott?" Should you cast such works as *War and Peace*, *Henry Esmond*, or *The Scarlet Letter* into that condescending visage, you would probably be informed that "Really, now, they couldn't be seriously considered historical novels." Yet Stephen Crane did as much research for *The Red Badge of Courage* as Margaret Mitchell did for

*Gone With the Wind.*

Whether it be a serious or hack novel, the problems are the same. Where does history end or fiction begin? Or do they really end or begin at all, being so inextricably intermingled? If fiction, it must use the methods of fiction, attention to the minute working out of destiny within the abstraction of plot confinement. If history, can it do the job history is supposed to do in the marshalling of facts into a consistent interpretation? Finally, what might the historian learn through the fictional interpretation of a significant fact in our past?

Mr. Lively did learn something. In his best chapter, "The Artist and the Past," he carefully investigates the Northern preoccupation with the spiritual growth of the individual through the war experience, usually by a realistic awakening to the evil that men do, and the Southern predilection for careful investigation of family structure and its break-up in the war. Nor are these themes recent since the author finds that, contrary to popular misconception, realistic as well as romantic-sentimental themes, appeared contemporaneously during and after the war. By an investigation of the best in Civil War fiction, the historian achieves some insight into the social structure of both sides and an understanding of the emotional factors which lead to war and the effect of war on the individual. The historians are just beginning to catch the novelist, with such works as Willey's study of the common fighting man leading the way.

Actually, the book is an historical study rather than a literary history, in spite of the author's protestations in his last chapter. The purpose of the work is to determine what Civil War fiction has to say about the war. The author, necessarily adjuring any esthetic standards, studied 512 novels with special attention to their themes and interpretation of the war. Both Northern and Southern writers were concerned with the same themes, such as divided loyalties, love and war, and the Negro. Nor on the whole was either side necessarily more romantic, more self-righteous, or more unreasonable than the other.

When the author discusses history in



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the novels, he is on surer ground. The ordinary run of "custom" romances followed the varying interpretations of the war on both sides, from belief in dire conspiracies to an attempt at dry-as-dust economic theories. Civil War fiction is best when it deals with the irrational impulse to war, the analysis of the emotional impulse to the physical charge at Gettysburg—a conclusion which should surprise no one familiar with the purposes of art, dependent as they are on emotional analysis of action. It is at its worst when it encroaches too blatantly on the domain of the historian, an observation Scott expressed in 1826.

What happens to truly artistic work in this mass shuffle of novels by the gross? Mr. Lively finds that they have the most to say to the historian. But he never says why. The problem of history and fiction is still wide open. The author capably analyzes the historical side but does not try to arrive at some conclusion about just what makes a good Civil War novel. In fact, the provinces of history and fic-

tion are never quite clear in the work. You might say it is unfair to castigate Lively for something he never tried to do. He leaves himself open to such criticism by his criticism of the literary historian whom he calls to account for not studying popular fiction such as the historical novel. Why should he, if his conclusion will tell him little about literature but a great deal about history? Mr. Lively, then, tells us very well what historical fiction can say to the historian about the Civil War, how it can supplement his own work, but he has little to say on just what a Civil War novel is and whether it is good fiction and bad history, or good history and bad fiction, or both.

G. A. Santangelo

Ron Levin, *I, The City and Other Poems*. Chapel Hill: New Sounds Publishers, 1956.

Ron Levin, sometimes of Chapel Hill, and author of *Rebellion*, recently publish-

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ed his second volume of poems *I, the City*, a thin volume containing the title poem and four shorter ones, all in free verse. Three of the five are descriptions of scene. "Train Through Faulkner Land" is a comment on racial bigotry, ending:

We have just taken on  
An all-white fungus,  
Our latest fare.

The principal poem, "I, the City," develops the theme of the city's giant growth "like a Paul Bunyan son" as it dwarfs man and dulls his sensibilities:

Now pavements push up through the  
heart's precincts while the street  
laughter hardens into stone.

Man is losing his dignity and his dreams:  
. . . eyes huddle hollow in bars

And hushed like clusters of ripened  
grapes

Stare into bottomless wells . . .  
Finally, man is defeated, and the city can  
proclaim:

I, the city, am the sequel to man  
And my conquest is complete.

Structurally, the principal poem is split into seven separate units, each unit prefaced by a bold-faced sub-title which either poses a question, followed by an answer, or makes a statement, followed by an exposition. This is a too-mechanical, ineffective solution to a very real problem of transition and concatenation. Levin is more successful structurally with the "Undisciplined, Unrhymed Sonnet" with its functional division into octave and sestet separating the two distinct movements of the poem.

I think the poet states the real problem of his poetry in the line:

Minds click, then scuffle with the  
image of the island.

The "scuffle with the image," the tension involved in transforming the raw poetic image into appropriate linguistic forms, lies too close to the surface of much of Levin's poetry. We are often aware of the tension, the strain for image; and this awareness interferes with our response to

the images. Something in our modern temper disposes us to demand an apparent "artlessness in art."

At his best, the poet is successful in engaging our sensibilities with a clean, rich image, a strong, tough diction, an appropriately cadenced line. Mr. Levin has only recently taken up the profession of poet, and his struggle now is one with technique. This reviewer is anticipating the poet's third volume, when, perhaps, he will have won his "scuffle with the image."

Joel H. Siegel

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*Books Received:* A revised edition of *A History of English Literature* (Macmillan, 1957) by Emile Legouis and Louis Cazamian has been reworked, brought up to date, and bolstered by a new bibliography. First published completely in 1930, it has gone through many editions, the present one being the most handsome and extensive. The history has two virtues often lacking in such works: first, its readability, often lacking in the handbook type of study, which should make it a handy tool for beginning students of the language, not because it is "popularized" or simple but rather because it can capture their interest so easily; second, its fresh insights, because the literature is seen from the perspective of a foreign critic who can often work from a different set of assumptions, digging up new and overlooked interpretations.

The Carolina Quarterly regrets an error in the biographical data given in the last issue for ROBERT SWARD, who is at present a student at the State University of Iowa. He was formerly a student at Bread Loaf, and has most recently been published in Folio and Poetry.





